

The New West Africa

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GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN

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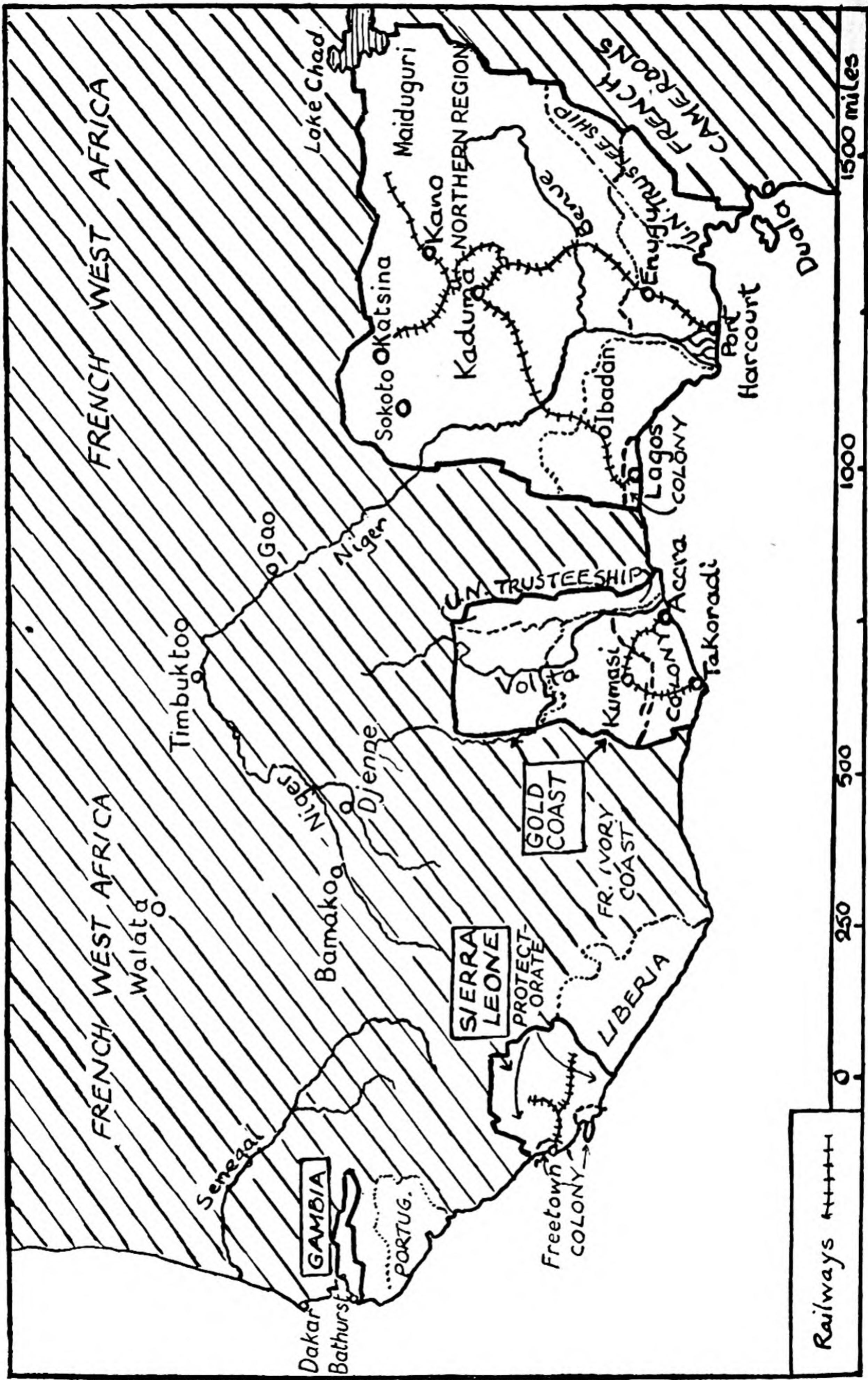
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THE NEW WEST AFRICA





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PROBLEMS OF INDEPENDENCE .

BY

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To the Memory of

EDMUND DENE MOREL

Great Champion of African Liberties

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Introduction

by

RITCHIE CALDER, C.B.E.

IT is strange how blind some people can be to the facts of history. And not only strange but tragic when people are blind to the facts of Asian and African history, because the history of our generation is going to be dominated by what is happening, and will happen, in Africa and Asia.

Somehow, we have got to get it into such peoples' heads that the world has shrunk so that Africa and Asia are only a few hours flying distance away; that the coloured peoples are now our near neighbours; and that we have, perforce, to contrive to get on neighbourly terms with those who share with us the resources of this minor planet—and share them numerically in a ratio of two to one. After all, there are 1,600,000,000 people in the world whose skins have a different colour from ours.

When it suits us, we call them 'backward'—and measured by material progress they are. Or we suggest that they are 'inferior'—although we fought a desperate war to destroy the biological heresy of a Master Race and affirmed the equality of peoples in resounding phrases and the Human Rights Convention. Or we dismiss them as 'unintelligent'—as Sir Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister of Rhodesia did, when he said, 'If you had studied them you would realize how hopeless they are.' Or we call them 'incompetent' and 'illiterate'—when we have denied them responsibility and education. Or 'congenitally lazy'—when they suffer from the lassitude of disease and hunger. Or we treat them as barbarians, label them 'sub-humans' or 'terrorists,' or 'brigands,' and show them a civilized example by dropping atom bombs on them, or by burning their villages or carrying off their stock or putting men, women and children in concentration camps.

No matter how we regard them, how we treat them or how we rationalize our excuses for keeping them in subjection, the inescapable fact of history is that they are on the march. There is an

awakening among the coloured peoples everywhere. No longer will they tolerate colonial status or the role of going hungry so that the white peoples may be well fed. Those who are ignorant among them are conscious of their ignorance and clamour for education. They want a better way of life, but it must be their own way of life improved, and not an imported, pre-fabricated civilization. They want to see their resources developed, but not at the price of alien domination.

This rising tide of political consciousness is irresistible. It is possible to build obstructions, but the tide will merely recoil from the breakwaters only to return with renewed force to batter and undermine such obstructions. If the Bourbons who 'learn nothing and forget nothing' would only look at Asia, they might realize what is going to happen in Africa. They have only to glance at a pre-war map. It would show South-East Asia lavishly splashed with British pillar-box red: the Indian sub-continent, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, and the northern strip of Borneo. The Dutch had a rich empire in the East Indies, stretching as far as from Ireland to the Caspian Sea and including as many diversified ethnic, cultural, religious and language groups as one would find on a journey from the Atlantic to the Middle East. The French were confidently established in Indo-China.

Look at this map today: India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia have become independent nations. France is committed to a struggle in Indo-China so wasteful that, apart from human casualties, it has cost the French twice as much as American aid has contributed to the rehabilitation of the mother country. Britain has a jungle war on her hands in Malaya; and there have been rumblings even in British Borneo. The Western nations have lost their influence in China.

The Empires, for all practical purposes, have gone; and in their places the emergent peoples are struggling into nationhood. The Unchanging East has changed. It has become the Resurgent East.

All this happened swiftly in Asia, which makes it all the more important that we should study the time-factor in Africa. Up to the outbreak of the Second World War, there were few obvious signs of impending political convulsions. Yet the Imperial Powers had prepared the way better than they imagined or intended. While

education did not touch more than a tiny fraction, young people had been trained in schools and universities or had gone abroad to be educated. Education was itself a frustration and a motivation because, more often than not, it was designed to equip students for subordinate posts in the administrations of their own countries. They learned what they were missing, through blocked opportunities, and they resented their inferiority.

But education had another revolutionary effect—an effect which Dr. Malan and the South African racialists would like to correct: it provided a common language in countries of mixed languages. In India, English provided the *lingua franca* of revolt in a multi-lingual sub-continent. In Indonesia, with some 200 different tongues, Dutch provided the means of communication. There were only a handful of educated people but they made articulate the aspirations of the many.

'Nationalism' for most of these countries was a modern invention, based on a common affinity of interest, rather than on historical grounds or even ethnic groupings. And the common affinity was the common rejection of the dominant Power. Just how significant this is can best be judged by looking at the map and realizing that with the exception of the partition, on religious grounds, of India and Pakistan, the new nations conform to the administrative areas of the imperial Powers. Burma, for example, is a 'union' of diverse states, so that one learns not to call someone from the hill states a 'Burmese.' He will admit to being a 'Burman,' as a Scotsman would admit being 'British' while resenting being called 'English.' And, although the Indonesians have abandoned federalism, the new nation is a fusion of scattered Dutch colonies, and the claims to West Guinea are the codicil to a demand for everything which was Dutch-administered.

This is not just something of interest to be noted in passing; it is a pattern which is being repeated in Africa—a pattern in which the administering Powers have been caught. The British could argue about Burma, that while the people of the plains might be ready for self-government, the hill-tribes needed tutelage. And so with the Dutch in the East Indies—what was valid for Java, they could argue, was not necessarily so for the Dyaks or the Guineans. Again in Libya, which the United Nations decreed should include the

Fezzan, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, it was said that while the Tripolitarians might be fairly competent to govern themselves they would (so I have heard the argument go in North Africa) only exploit the tribal Cyrenaicans and 'primitive' Fezzanese. The same distinction and devices apply in West Africa, as may be judged from this book. But even if the distinction could be sustained in argument it would still be irrelevant in the issue, because the administrative convenience becomes the pattern of nationhood.

There is another significant analogy between Asia and Africa. While it is true that the Japanese, during their occupation, set the fuse of the time-bomb of independence in Burma and Indonesia by creating what they thought were dummy national governments, there is some substance in the complaints of those Dutch who are still bitter about being expelled from the East Indies—that it was the 'bad' example of the British granting independence to India, Ceylon and Burma which encouraged the Indonesians. (Just as the French in North Africa have bitterly complained that the 'bad' example of the Fezzan has undermined their position in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.)

One can therefore see Dr. Malan's point when he says 'that the unfortunate and unrealistic Gold Coast policy of the former British Government understandably found its echo throughout the whole continent' and that 'the meddlesome and aggressive United Nations which was intended to help to preserve world peace vigorously contributed, through the creation of so-called world opinion, to arouse unrest and even revolt among the more primitive races.'

That is one way of looking at it—through a glass darkly. Yet history will unquestionably report that nothing which Britain did in India so well became her as the manner of her going. After centuries of bitterness, it wiped the score and produced a goodwill which is genuine and rewarding. Contrast this with the scars left by the Dutch in Indonesia, when, in spite of the United Nations, they carried war into the heart of Java and arrested the Government of the Republic. Or compare it with Burma, where a hesitation, a misreading of the circumstances and of the mood of a people, caused that temporary resentment which led the Burmans to contract out of the Commonwealth.

The example in the Gold Coast and the progress towards political

self-determination in Nigeria are bound to have their repercussions throughout the whole continent. They are bound to accelerate an historical process which may work dangerously and convulsively elsewhere.

In West Africa there is no white settler problem. The white people there are transients; they do their 'tour of duty' and go home. They have not tried to make it their 'home' as others have done in East Africa, the Rhodesias and South Africa: they are visitors, not a resident minority. Commercial interests may be involved, but not settlers who claim their lands and their right to dominate. Where they exist, the ultimate solution can only be violent conflict or some sort of genuine partnership in which white and black can live side by side. How far we are from that is only too plain from events; but reaction cannot, in the long-run, prevail. The test before the black peoples of West Africa is to show their capacity to rule because, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, this will make the claims of their fellow-Africans the more irresistible.

Politics are not enough. Self-government is a mockery unless it raises the standards of the people out of poverty and sickness and misery. Higher standards can be achieved only through social, economic and technological advance. There must be a clearing away of the jungle of diseases before either the material resources of the countries or the innate resources of the peoples can be properly developed, for disease is one of the dominant factors of poverty, particularly in tropical countries. A second factor is deficient feeding—even if it is short of actual starvation. A third is illiteracy. A fourth is too many people trying to wrest a living from the soil; and that means the absorption of excess rural population into local industries as well as into factory development. A fifth is the absence of power in the shape of industrial energy. All these problems as well as the development of the natural resources, of cash crops and of raw materials, have to be tackled.

And for most of it the Africans will need outside help—in a spirit of real partnership and not of exploitation. This is true Mutual Aid, because, while others have experience to contribute, the Africans as they develop will have much to give in return. One does not doubt their capacity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, but, as a matter of observation, one notices that there are

far too few students of medicine, engineering, agriculture and even education among those who come to Britain to study. That balance must be redressed and it is now up to the West Africans themselves to redress it.

No one should under-estimate the reformation, in recent years, of the attitude of Britain and British administrators to the legitimate claims and needs of the West African people. This book represents a soul-searching and a *critique*, necessary and salutary, without which our appraisal of West Africa and, by reference, the African problem generally, cannot be soundly based. But it is not the intention of those who have devised it to 'write off' or undervalue the efforts and services of the many enlightened, sincere and self-sacrificing British men and women who have worked for the well-being of the West Africans. A period of transition is a difficult one for Colonial Civil Servants calling for tact, judgment and restraint. What they do is less important even than how they do it. And, on the whole, West Africa in the critical years has been well served.

Nor should West Africans, nor the reader, forget the policies of Mr. Arthur Creech Jones and Mr. James Griffiths as Colonial Secretaries of the Labour Government which set West Africa securely on the way to self-government. Nor the substantial benefits which the British taxpayer conferred through the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund.

As Mr. Griffiths said in his broadcast on 'Britain's Responsibilities in Africa' referring to the new political consciousness:

'It is a challenge, an opportunity and a choice. If we are blind to its significance, if we choose to resent it, if we seek to thwart it and repress it, then we shall have sacrificed the trust and goodwill of millions of human beings in Africa and Asia and all over the world. But if we welcome it as the upsurge of the human spirit among the peoples in all the colonies, if we see in it an opportunity to guide its development and to help to harness it to constructive tasks we can lay the foundations—economic, social and political—on which democratic self-government can be built and sustained.'

CHAPTER I

What this Book is About

WE used to call it 'the white man's grave.' Fever-ridden mangrove swamps, the chaos of cannibal tribes, the grave of Mungo Park and many brave explorers: these and a few other well-impressed comminglings of fact and legend were all that most of us have known of 'West Africa'—these and the occasional glimpse from an anchored liner of twisted jungle vegetation which twirled and tailed away in everlasting rain, meanwhile we lay in deck-chairs with the thermometer trembling at a hundred in the shade. What good could possibly come out of this place? 'The steady kill, kill, kill of the West African region has hampered and hindered all enterprise there—missionary, mercantile and administrative . . .' Such was the view of one great traveller, Mary Kingsley, writing in 1899: and such, no doubt, was the truth. Innumerable sailor's songs lamented this murderous place. 'Beware and take care of the Bight of Benin: For one that comes out there are forty go in . . .'

And yet today, no more than fifty years since Mary Kingsley spoke the white man's mind upon the subject, we already know enough about West Africa to know that these impressions reflected only the surface of the subject. We know that these many and varied peoples of West Africa—of the coast and the hinterland of the great westward bulge of the African continent—are the peoples of an ancient and significant culture and civilization. We know that they have had a long and interesting past. From the evidence of what they are doing and saying and working for today, we can infer that they will have a long and interesting future.

Because Africa is large and far away, it will be useful first of all to fix the geographical limits of this region that is called 'West Africa.' They enclose not the whole of western Africa, but only that part which lies to the south of the twelfth or thirteenth parallel of latitude: a line that runs from a little to the north of the great French Port of Dakar on the coastline of the middle Atlantic to the swamps of Lake Chad in the middle of the continent. This region

is bordered along its northern edge by the deserts of the Sahara—giving sustenance to no more than a few thousand nomads—and along its southern edge by the sea. Its shape is thus rectangular, with the Saharan emptiness along the top and the sea along the bottom; with Senegal, the Gambia, French Guinea at the leftward end; and with Nigeria, the Cameroons at the rightward end. In this great rectangle there live some sixty million people of bewildering linguistic and ethnic variety. This is by far the most densely populated region of Africa. With a few exceptions in Central Africa, this is also the only region of Africa where the white man has no native or permanent settlement.

One great human division has existed, however, and still exists. This densely populated rectangle divides into two parts. The bottom third of this rectangle (slicing it from left to right) consists largely of tropical rain forest. The upper two-thirds consists largely of grass and scrub lands which merge, along the top, into the rocky wastes of the Sahara. These two types of vegetation and climate have deeply influenced the inhabitants, so that the 'southern peoples' of the tropical rain forest are different in many ways from the 'northern peoples' of the grass and scrub lands. Imperialist conquest has always chopped across this east-west 'grain,' making the confusion still more confounded: for example, both Nigeria and the Gold Coast enclose 'southern' and 'northern' peoples, sharply contrasted among themselves, while French West Africa includes the 'southern' peoples of the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, and Guinea, as well as the 'northern' peoples of the Upper Niger, the Volta, the Western Sudan, Senegal and Mauritania. With a reservation for this one great human division, and lesser reservations for many other less important human divisions, it can be said that *all* these peoples possess the elements of a common culture and a common future: one of the requirements of a rational world order, clearly enough, will be the federation of these West African territories into coherently organized units.

In political terms, we can put the matter more simply. We can say that West Africa is that part of the continent south of the Sahara where African populations, in the last few years, have moved long strides toward political independence. These strides have taken them far ahead of their fellows in central, eastern, or southern

Africa. While Africans elsewhere south of the Sahara are deprived of more than the merest shadow of political representation, or are denied even that, the peoples of Nigeria and the Gold Coast—and in a lesser but still important degree the peoples of French Africa—have acquired important political rights and responsibilities.

Four million people who inhabit the Gold Coast have now had universal manhood suffrage since 1950.

Nearly thirty millions who inhabit Nigeria have had taxpayers' suffrage since the latter part of 1951, which means that at any rate the majority of them have the right to elect political representatives to their own parliament.

Sixteen millions who inhabit French West Africa have had universal manhood suffrage (or practically that) since 1946, although the proportion of voters to deputies is extremely high, and the deputies do not sit in African parliaments but as members of the National Assembly in Paris. The Western Sudan, which is the region of the once-great towns of Timbuktu, Gao, Segou, and is not to be confused with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, lying far to the east on the other side of Africa, has about 900,000 African voters who elect four deputies to the National Assembly in Paris. Senegal, another French territory, has 600,000 African voters who elect two deputies to the National Assembly.

One could multiply the signs of political advance. Subject though they are to many practical reservations, these political gains are real and substantial. They mean that West Africa has entered the road to self-government, though some of its peoples have still a long way to go before they will be within sight of that goal. Here, in the great bend of the Gulf of Guinea, richly endowed communities are fast growing out of the long colonial epoch into nationhood.

This growth will be momentous for Africa, for it will mark the emergence of African nations into the modern world. But it will be momentous also for Britain, since Britain and the British people are deeply and irrevocably involved in the destinies of West Africa. Great things are coming to pass in West Africa: they demand the understanding and support of the British people.

What we have tried to do in this book is to set the new West Africa in its broad historical context, and to show what political and economic forces and factors are now at work. And we have

tried to do this for people in Britain who, while they may not have time to study these matters deeply, are none the less conscious of the great changes now occurring or impending in parts of West Africa, and are eager to understand them. We have made no attempt to provide more than the essential outline, and we have concentrated for our purpose mainly on the Gold Coast and Nigeria, these being both the most important British territories in West Africa and the farthest advanced along the road to independent nationhood.

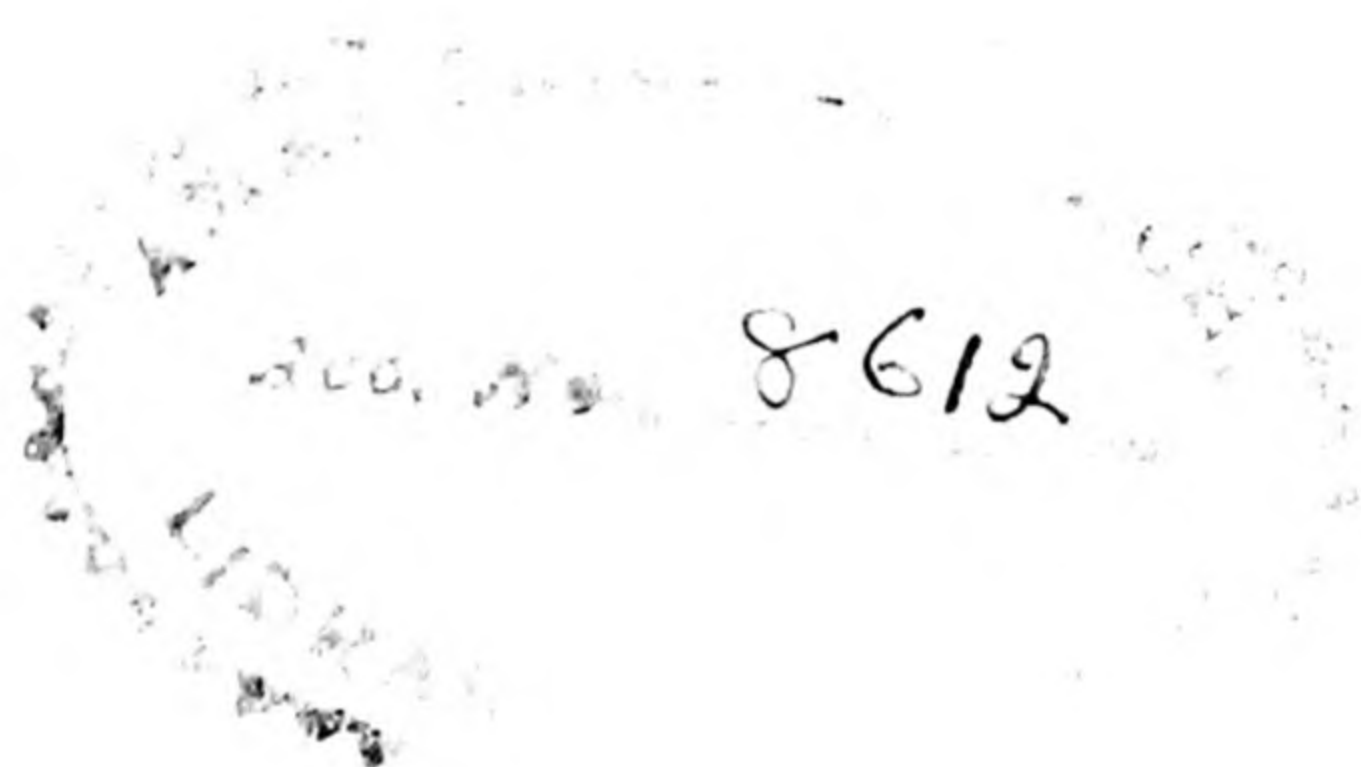
Amanke Okafor begins with an historical outline which should help to correct a familiar notion that all was savage chaos in West Africa before the white man came; and to introduce the reader to some of the fascinating story of the past. Thomas Hodgkin takes up the story of political institutions in contemporary times, and describes how these variegated societies are built, what sort of people live in West Africa today, and how they see their own future. Henry Collins analyses the ways in which these peoples earn their living, the economic relations which they have with Britain and the rest of the world and the extent to which they have remained colonial dependencies, and the economic problems of independence.

Le Gros Clark tackles the great problem of transition from 'backward' colony to independent nation from a wider point of view, discussing what the part of applied science may be in helping to effect the transition. What Le Gros Clark has to say must be of especial interest to all who believe that the 'advanced' countries can and should lend freely of their wealth and their experience to the 'backward' countries.

Finally, we conclude with some reflections on British responsibility. While each of us is individually responsible only for his own chapter, we are all broadly agreed upon the various conclusions that are drawn throughout the book; and we are at one in believing that Britain faces in West Africa—and generally throughout the British Colonies and Protectorates—a noble challenge to its courage, imagination, and good sense. We should like this book to prove a useful contribution to resolving the problems of colonial advancement and to forming a progressive colonial policy.

In editing these chapters, I have had the valued collaboration of Adenekan Ademola, of Nigeria. Also, I wish particularly to place

on record our appreciation of the great interest and help we have received from the Foundation for World Government, of Charlottesville, Virginia; and of the encouragement which we have received from the Executive Committee of the Union of Democratic Control. It is perhaps appropriate that a book which looks to the rational and hopeful reshaping of West Africa should be helped by an organization which has at heart the application to government of science and good sense; and should be sponsored by the organization that was founded by E. D. Morel, great champion of African liberties. It remains to add that the authors are alone responsible for the views expressed in these pages.



CHAPTER II

West African Background

AN OUTLINE

OF West Africa Sir George Taubman Goldie, the 'Founder of Nigeria,' wrote: 'Between these great rivers of East and West Africa (the Nile and the Niger), lie regions of the breadth of the entire continent of Europe, regions which were, in 1819, altogether unknown and believed to be but sparsely inhabited. It was not until Major Denham and Capt. Clapperton, in 1823-25, and Dr. Barth, in 1849-55, explored this vast area on behalf of the British Government, that the civilized world recognized that this heart of Africa was no barren desert. They found that it was filled with populous and organized States, that it possessed a fertile soil and intelligent and industrious inhabitants . . .'¹

Before the end of the nineteenth century, however, the independence of these intelligent and industrious people had been destroyed, and the face of their continent changed.

Anthropologists call the inhabitants of the Western portion of Africa the 'pure' negroes, and their country Negroland. Negroland stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the River Nile, and from the south of Tripoli to the Gulf of Guinea. The populations inhabiting this vast area of land are divided into many peoples, and have often been divided into many governments as well, but they have related characteristics and have shared common experiences.

At one time, in the sixteenth century, the greater part of West Africa formed one empire, and was under one government. Yet West Africa is a country of many peoples, and these peoples are so intimately mixed that it is often difficult to say where their boundaries lie. For instance, the Fulanis live all the way from the Gambia to Adamawa, just as do the Tauregs; the Mandingoes and the Hausas have towns practically everywhere north and south of the Kong mountains. The only certain thing is that, in the numerous political states that grew and flourished in West Africa, one or another people was dominant at different times, so that we could say this was a

Mandingo State and that was a Foulah State—even though within each state could be found large numbers of other peoples. It is an unprofitable occupation to try to divide West Africa into watertight compartments.

The largest nations comprising the West African peoples today are, starting from the West, the Jollofs; the Fulanis (who are also called Foulahs, Fulbe, Fellatah); the Mandingoes. These people have their origin in the regions of the River Senegal, the River Gambia, and the upper reaches of the River Niger, including Sierra Leone. Farther on and to the south are the Susu; north of them, near the bend of the Niger, the Mosi; and still farther north, that is, in the desert, the Beriberis (the Berbers, also called Tauregs or Tawareks).

Eastwards, from Borgu and Sokoto to Lake Chad and down to the confluence of the Niger and the Benue live the Hausas; near them, and stretching far to the east are the Kanuris, who built the two empires of Bornu and Kanem; to the south of the Kanuris live the people of Adamawa, and the Musgu nations whose dwellings are said to have great architectural beauty. Still farther down are the different nations of the Cameroons.

Turning again towards the west, we have the Ekoi, the Ibibio and the Efik, living around the Cross River; then the Ibos living on both banks of the Lower Niger; and to the west of them the Edos (Binis) and the Yorubas; the Jekris, the Urhobas (Sobos), the Ijaio, share the Niger Delta with the Ibos. Next to the Yorubas are the Dahomeans, the only nation in West Africa that had a separate women's army. Next to the Dahomeans, still moving westwards, are the Togos, and farther west, the Fantis and the Ashantis, whose northern territories touch the Mosi.

Lastly, we find the Krus, who live in the Ivory Coast and Liberia. Liberia was a settlement purchased by the American Colonization Society, formed in 1817, for the purpose of settling freed American negroes whose growing numbers was causing anxiety to the American Government. To get rid of as many of them as possible, a territory was purchased on the west coast of Africa at Cape Mesurada, and the first batch of American negroes was settled there on December 1, 1822. The American immigrants increased as years went by, and by further purchases and conquests they enlarged their territories into what is now modern Liberia, and including

within their territories many of the original inhabitants of that part. Liberia is an independent state, but it is, and has been ever since its foundation, under the influence of the United States of America.²

A similar settlement for freed negro slaves had been made by the British Government at Freetown in Sierra Leone, in 1787. Later on, by the annexation of the surrounding territories, the present colony and protectorate of Sierra Leone was formed.

The sources of West African history are, at present, the oral tradition of the West African peoples; the records of ancient geographers and historians who had collected information about West Africa from merchants and travellers, such as the ancient writers of Greece and Rome; the writings of Arabian and Moorish scholars who had either personally travelled in West Africa or had collected information from others, such men as El Bekri (957), Edrisi (1153), Ibn Said (1282), Ibn Batuta (1353), Khaldun (1381), and John Leo the African (1526); records of the early Portuguese traders to West Africa; and the numerous accounts of European travellers from the eighteenth century onward, particularly those of Dr. Henry Barth, whose journals contain many useful facts concerning the state of parts of West Africa they visited. Some of these travellers' accounts do not pretend to be honest, and are quite useless.

Lastly, there are the written records left by West Africans themselves, for some West Africans were literate quite early in their history. This source is not very big, however, for in the general destruction attendant upon the slave trade in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much material was destroyed; and what escaped the slave-raiders fell before the European conquistadors, who, in the process of subjugating West Africa to French, German, and British rule, burnt down and destroyed many flourishing towns which had been the centres of civilization and culture. Moreover, education was not by any means general in West Africa; educated West Africans wrote in Arabic; and the production of literary works was undertaken only by the well-to-do.

When West Africans did succeed in evolving their own native alphabet, which might have made writing a common possession, it was too late, for it was on the eve of the European conquest; and this invention of writing was stifled along with other institutions of

the West African peoples. This invention was made by the Vai, a nation now incorporated into Liberia. They perfected it about 1832, and within a few years it had spread through their country and was taught in their schools. In 1849 they sent three of their manuscripts to England where they were printed into books. 'I have a copy lent me by Mr. Norris, who kindly translated a few lines to me the other day,' stated Mr. A. Hamilton in his lecture on 'the River Niger,' delivered at the Bromley Literary Institute, 1862, 'with such evidence in our hands, I think we should be slow to adopt any theory of an inherent inferiority in the coloured races of Africa.' 'It is evident they borrowed none of the characters from European or Arabic writings—the alphabet or rather syllabarium, consists of nearly 200 characters, each representing a syllable.'³ Here are some of these characters, quoted by Mr. Hamilton from the Geographical Society's *Journal*, Vol. 20:—

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The Rev. Henry Rowley, in his book *Africa Unveiled*, published in 1876, commented on the same development. He said: 'But there is one of the least of the tribes of this division of Western Africa that deserves special mention, from the fact that it has wiped away the reproach that the Africans have never been equal to the invention of a written language. The Veys whose territory at one time extended along the sea-coast from Galinas to Cape Morat, but whose territorial possessions are now insignificant, have accomplished this.' 'The characters they use are all new, and there is no reason to believe that in this really great intellectual effort they received assistance from any other people. They laboured at it for many years until they brought it to a state of perfection sufficient for all practical purposes . . . the Veys have books printed in their own language and character.'

The invention of what might have been a West African native alphabet came too late, and did not spread beyond the Vai country, so that until English and French were introduced late in the nineteenth century, educated West Africans wrote only in Arabic; and it is in Arabic that their historical records are found.

While travelling in West Africa in 1849-55, Dr. Henry Barth, a German scientist, came across some of these documents, and helped to popularize them.⁴ The most important of those he found were the history of the Songhay kingdom by Ahmed Baba, a learned West African, published at the beginning of the seventeenth century; a history of Bornu; and some chronicles of Bornu kings.

Barth was so impressed with the importance of the work of Ahmed Baba that he wrote: 'I have no hesitation in asserting that the work of Ahmed Baba will be one of the most important additions which the present age has made to the history of mankind, in a branch which was formerly almost unknown.'

Much material concerning West African history still lies hidden, and only intensive research, some of which is now begun, can bring it fully into the light.

Ancient Times

The most important physical characteristic of West Africa is the River Niger, which roughly divides the habitable parts of the country into two halves.

Up to the time of Mungo Park, no one outside West Africa knew for certain where the river originated, where it terminated, or even what direction it followed. So that from very early times to the eighteenth century, the Niger was the object of much speculation and controversy in Europe.

The Greeks called it 'the Nile of the Negroes,' and thought that it was a branch of the Egyptian Nile, although Herodotus rightly stated that it flowed from west to east. The Romans gave it the name Niger, meaning the River of the Black People, and from that name the mediaeval European writers called the whole of West Africa *Nigritia*. The Arabs called the region Belad Soudan, which name it still bears. The Africans themselves gave different names to the River Niger, as it flowed from territory to territory; some called it Joliba, some Isa, and some Quotta.

But by whatever name it was called, the River Niger has been the centre of West African life from time immemorial.

How long West Africans have been in their present habitation no one knows. Perhaps they have been there since the beginning of time. For Talbot, in *Southern Nigeria*, says that there is a growing

belief in the truth of Darwin's conjecture that Africa may have been the birthplace of mankind. 'There are indeed grounds for the belief that the oldest European palaeolithic—or protolithic—industry came from Africa by way of land bridges which then existed across the Mediterranean,' he said. The Sahara Desert was said to have been fertile and habitable in 40000 B.C. Talbot also thinks that iron has been an ancient industry in West Africa. That may be so. Certain it is that there is no tradition among West Africans of a time when they did not work iron.

West African peoples would appear to have left the savage life many centuries before the Christian era, to have learnt agriculture, the use of iron, gold, and other metals, and to have begun to live in cities. In Herodotus it is related how a group of young Nasomenes—a people inhabiting the Mediterranean part of Africa—had travelled southwards across the Desert until they came to a country inhabited by black people. They were seized and taken to a city, and near the city flowed a wide river, the stream of which came from the west to the east, and in that river crocodiles were seen. This river has been identified as the River Niger, and many people think that the city referred to was Timbuktu. The people of the city were presumably civilized, for they did no harm to the young men, who were allowed to return to their country.

About the year 610 B.C. an Egyptian king, Neco, despatched some Phoenicians to sail round Africa. The Phoenicians accomplished the circumnavigation in three years and proved that Africa was a peninsula. After that, the Carthaginians also sailed round the continent, and established regular commercial intercourse with the countries of West Africa. This is how the story is told of their manner of trade: 'There is a quarter of Libya with a nation of men residing beyond the Pillars of Hercules; when they (the Carthaginians) arrive there, they unload their freight, and placing the wares in order on the strand, go aboard their vessels, and raise a smoke; that the inhabitants, seeing the smoke, come down to the sea; and after putting down gold, as the price for the wares, withdraw to a distance from them; that the Carthaginians then debark and examine; and if the gold appears to them sufficient for the articles, they take it up and go their ways; but if not sufficient, they again go aboard their ships; and the inhabitants, advancing accordingly, place more

gold, until they have contented the merchants. The Carthaginians add that neither party endeavours to cheat; for that neither do they themselves touch the gold till the amount is brought equal to the worth of the merchandise; nor do the inhabitants meddle with the wares before the merchants have taken the gold dust.'⁵

This kind of 'silent trade' continued to exist in West Africa until modern times, and was observed by European travellers.

In the year 570 B.C. thirty thousand emigrants, men, women, and children, set out from Carthage to West Africa, under the leadership of Hanno. It is said that they founded colonies on the coast of Morocco: that they went farther down than Morocco is a matter of conjecture.

After Hanno, nothing more is heard of any other people attempting to make contact with West Africa along the coast till the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese began their adventures.

The camel found in the Sahara Desert is said to have come originally from Arabia. What time that happened is obscure; but its introduction was of very great importance, for it enabled the building of commercial bridges over the desert between Negroland and the countries of the Mediterranean. At the opening of the Christian era, well-established caravan routes already led from Egypt, Tripoli, the Barbary Coast and Morocco to the populous cities of West Africa. For some centuries they were the only means by which the products of West Africa reached Europe. Genoa and Venice in their day did brisk trade with Negroland, through agents stationed in North African ports. The middle men for this trade were always the Arabs, who together with the Tauregs (the dwellers in the desert) completely controlled the caravan routes, and effectively barred all Europeans from direct contact with the heart of Negroland. The position did not change until the second half of the nineteenth century.

West Africa up to 1600

The mediaeval period is called the 'Golden Age' of West African Civilization. During this time, all the main features of West African life seem to have matured. Varied forms of State organization were developed, from theocratic forms of absolutism to advanced forms of tribal democracy. Islam made its appearance and gave the impetus

to, and supplied the vehicle for, the development of education, of schools and universities, of literature and art. Sculpture, carving, iron and bronze work reached a high standard. The arts of commerce were developed. There emerged the sculptures of Ife, the wonderful carvings of Benin, the ironwork of Awka.

Between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1528 travellers from the Arab world passed in large numbers through Negroland and wrote down memorable accounts of the civilization that they found. The names of rich and populous negro towns began to be heard abroad. Many states developed at this period.

Ghana

In A.D. 1067 Ghana (or Ghanata), the first empire that developed in western Africa, was at the best epoch of its life. The city itself, from which the empire got its name, was a converging point of many caravan routes, and was the resort of the learned and pious of many nations. It was situated to the north of the Senegal River, and was founded before the Moslem era by the Mandingo nation. Its development as a powerful city was quite rapid, and very soon other towns and nations other than the Mandingo came under its sway. No one knows the exact extent of Ghana at the height of its power in the eleventh century; but its influence must have been very wide, and may have reached as far as some of the territories now called the Gold Coast.

Mohammedan missionaries came early to Ghana, and, by A.D. 679, there were already twelve mosques in the city. Ahmed Baba, the West African historian, records that twenty kings had already ruled in Ghana at the time when Mohammed began his religious crusade. Many schools of learning were to be found in Ghana city. One notable town which was subject to Ghana was Walata, which was visited by Leo Africanus in the sixteenth century.

In 1076 Ghana was conquered by the Senhaja, a people who lived farther north, in the western part of the Sahara Desert. They were Muslims, and when they took Ghana they compelled every one who was not already a Muslim to become one. Being a desert people, they soon returned to their habitation: but Ghana had become much weakened and in 1203 was finally conquered and occupied by the Susu.

At the time that Ghana flourished, another kingdom with a similar name was rising in the Niger. This was Jenne (sometimes written Jinni, Ghinny or Ghinea). It was founded in A.D. 1043. It lay on the route between Walata in the north and Timbuktu in the east. By 1351 it was already an important commercial centre and had become a powerful kingdom. Its influence was such that the regions on the coast to the south of it were called the Guinea Coast after Jenne.

When Leo Africanus travelled in West Africa in 1526, Jenne was one of the negro kingdoms he saw. It then stretched for 250 miles along the River Niger, and was the place where the salt from the salt mines of Teghaza and gold from Bitu were sold. About A.D. 1204 the king of Jenne and many of his subjects embraced Islam. Soon after, in 1235, Mari Jata, who was king of Mali, conquered Jenne and increased its commercial importance by making it the resort of trade within his dominions.

Leo Africanus on his visit observed that the people of Jenne grew barley, rice and cotton, and raised cattle and had plenty of fish. 'Their cotton they sell to merchants of Barbary for European merchandise.'⁶

The king of Jenne lived in a great town with his priest doctors, merchants, and the principal men of the state. Jenne houses were built with clay and whitewashed with chalk, and the roofs were thatched with straw. The people wore black or blue cotton with which they also covered their heads, 'but the priests and doctors of their law go appavelled in white cotton.'

Mali

Mali (or Melle) was an even wider empire than Ghana. The town of Mali was situated on a tributary of the Niger, north of what is now the French Ivory Coast. In A.D. 1235 Mari Jata, then king of Mali, conquered the Susu who were then masters of Ghana, and started the expansion of Mali. Under King Musa, called Mansa Musa or Kankan Musa, Mali reached the height of its power with immense military strength. Mansa Musa was a man of great energy, and extended his dominions over a large part of Negroland. Ahmed Baba described him as a man of 'aggressive strength without measure or limit.' He followed up the conquest of the Susu by his predecessor

by taking over all the territories of Ghana (1311). Finally, he conquered Zagha or western Tekrur, Silla, Timbuktu, and finally Songhay with its capital Gao.

Having consolidated his conquests Musa made a pilgrimage to Mecca, with such a numerous following and such magnificence that he caused much admiration in Europe. Europeans referred to him as 'Musa Mali, lord of the negroes of Guinea.'

During Musa's reign the Mosi, who live between the bend of the River Niger and what is now the northern territories of the Gold Coast, made their appearance as a nation, organized under a king. They were not Moslems and did not like the Mohammedan religion. They attacked Timbuktu in 1329 and put it to fire and sword, the garrison of Mali making their escape and giving up the town. In 1330 Mansa Musa died and was succeeded by his son.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century the empire of Mali began to disintegrate; the governors of the various provinces began to make themselves independent. The Tauregs (or Berbers of the desert) began to make raids on its towns. In spite of all this, however, Cadamosta was still able to describe Mali in the middle of the fifteenth century as the most powerful of the kingdoms of Negroland and the most important in commerce.

Songhay

In 1501 Askia, king of Songhay, put an end to the independence of Mali (Melle) and incorporated it, together with all its dependencies, into his own dominions. 'But the final extinction of Mali as an empire,' writes Dr. Robert Brown in his notes to Leo, 'was due to a civil war between the sons of Ferengh Mahmud, about the middle of the seventeenth century, in which all the most powerful tribes in that part of Africa engaged. The result was that the capital of Mali was destroyed, and the country divided up among the various participants in this suicidal struggle. The Baghena lordship (which formed a sizeable part of Ghana) was given by Mulai Esmail of Morocco (that was after he had conquered the Songhay empire in the seventeenth century), under a sort of feudal tenure, to the chief of the Mebarek tribe.'

At the time Leo visited Mali it was no longer an independent kingdom but a vassal kingdom of Songhay. Yet the inhabitants were

well-to-do. Describing the capital Leo wrote: 'Here are many artificers and merchants in all places; and yet the king honourably entertaineth all strangers. The inhabitants are rich and have plenty of wares. Here are great store of temples, priests and professors, which professors read their lectures only in the temples, because they have no colleges at all. The people of this region excel all other Negroes in wit, civility, and industry; and were the first that embraced the law of Mahommed. . . .'

Songhay outshone by the vast extent of its territories, and by the colour and romance of its period, anything that had existed hitherto in West Africa.

The Songhay kingdom was said to have had its original seat in the towns of Tindirma and Dire on the banks of the Niger.⁷ By A.D. 300 they had developed a monarchical form of government, their kings living in Kukia. About A.D. 679 a new dynasty was founded, the Za dynasty, by a man said to be a Libyan. One of his descendants, Za Kasi, embraced Islam in A.D. 1009. A new capital Gao (Gagho, Gogo) was founded in A.D. 893. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Mansa Musa, king of Mali, subdued the Songhays and took their capital. From that time, 1311, Songhay paid tribute to Mali as a dependency.

When Magha succeeded his father Mansa Musa as king of Mali, he had in his court two young princes of Songhay, who were serving as pages, Ali Killun and his brother. These two young men made their escape from the court of Mali and safely reached their own country. Ali Killun placed himself at the head of his people and declared the Songhays independent of Mali. He founded the famous Sonni dynasty.

Sonni Ali, son of Mohammed Dan, ascended the Songhay throne in 1464. He avenged the former enslavement of his people by conquering Mali; then he began to push out the frontiers of Songhay until it included all the former territories of Ghana. He reconquered Timbuktu, which the desert Tauregs had snatched from Mali, and plundered the town. His conduct to the learned men of Timbuktu made him hated ever afterwards by the Muslims.

It was to Sonni Ali that João II of Portugal sent an embassy in 1468; and Ali allowed the Portuguese to set up a 'factory' at Wadan for the purpose of trade. Sonni Ali's friendship with this Christian

monarch further reduced his popularity with his Mohammedan subjects.

Askia Mohammed

When Sonni Ali died in 1492, the year that Columbus discovered America, his son ascended the throne. But he was not long there. An officer in Sonni's army, Mohammed ben Abn Bakr El Hady, a native of Sindar in Kebbi, not far from present Nigeria, led men against the new king, defeated him, and drove him out. Then he himself ascended the throne and took the title—Askia, thus founding a new dynasty, the dynasty of the Askias.

Immediately he became king, Mohammed ben Abn Bakr, or Askia, created a standing army, the first in West African history. He also released all his subjects from military service, thereby breaking with the policy of Sonni Ali, who had compelled every able-bodied man to follow him to his wars.

Askia then consolidated his regime, appointing new governors to the various provinces. After that he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in as grand a style and splendour as Musa. On his return he resumed the extension of the frontiers of Songhay. He conquered countries up to the Senegal and the Gambia and to the very shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Then he turned up to Bornu and down to Adamawa, so that all Hausaland came under his rule.

By 1528 Askia's dominions stretched uninterruptedly from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad and from the northern parts of modern Gold Coast to the south of Morocco. In short, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, with the exception of the countries on the Lower Niger and the coasts of Guinea, the greater part of modern West Africa was under one monarch and one government.

In 1528 Askia's son, Musa, revolted against him and forced him to abdicate. Askia was now an old man, having reigned for thirty-six years. He abdicated and Musa succeeded him. Then began the struggle between Musa and his numerous brothers, and the dynastic quarrels that were to bring down the Songhay empire.

The army began to plan an independent role. They made and unmade kings. At the death of Musa in 1535 the army helped Mohammed Bankore to the throne, then turned against him,

deposed him and put up Ismail as Askia (or king). On the death of Ismail they made Ishak king.

Mulai Ahmed, emperor of Morocco, was an ambitious ruler who had for long cast longing glances at the territories of the negro people, particularly at Tegahza which contained the famous salt mines. In 1549, wanting to cash in on the rivalries of the sons of Askia Mohammed, he demanded the cession of Tegahza. Ishak, being an energetic king, sent an army to ravage the territories of Mulai Ahmed, in order to teach him to mind his own business. But in 1584, after his death, Mulai Ahmed retaliated by sending an army to occupy Tegahza. When the news of the loss of the town reached Gao, the people opened new salt mines elsewhere.

Dynastic quarrels continued unabated, and Mulai Ahmed of Morocco seized his chance. In 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada, he sent an army of 3,600 men equipped with muskets against Songhay. The Songhay people had no firearms, and were divided among themselves, so that the Moroccans gained an easy victory. They took Timbuktu in 1591, and made all the Songhay provinces tributary to them, driving out the king of Songhay. But then revolts broke out against them throughout the Songhay dominions. Every people fought to free itself. 'People began everywhere to fight against each other and property became exposed to constant danger; and this ruin began, spread, increased, and at length prevailed throughout the whole region.' So wrote Ahmed Baba, who himself was a victim of the ruin he described, for he was carried away captive to Morocco on the fall of Timbuktu.

In 1603 Mulai Ahmed, conqueror of Songhay, died. The Songhay empire began rapidly to fall apart, and by 1667 the very Moroccans who had been left in the different places as garrisons, had mixed thoroughly with the people they were to guard; had constituted themselves a ruling class; and had made themselves independent of Morocco.

Timbuktu

In 1526 the Songhay empire was in its glory, and Timbuktu was its flower. Timbuktu, though not the capital, was the centre of learning and culture. The houses were well built, the mosques having walls of stone. The mosque of Sankore was especially

impressive, and attached to it was the notable University of Sankore. There were shops of artificers and merchants and weavers of linen and cotton cloth. The inhabitants were rich, having plenty of corn, cattle, milk and butter, although salt was still a scarce commodity.

'The rich king of Tombuto [Timbuktu]' wrote Leo, referring to Askia Mohammed, 'hath plates and sceptres of gold, some weighing 1300 pounds, and he keeps a magnificent and well-furnished court.' In Timbuktu, said Leo, 'are great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought divers manuscripts or written books out of Barbary, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise.'

The currency of Timbuktu was gold coin without stamp; while for small transactions cowrie shells were used. The inhabitants of Timbuktu were said to be people of cheerful disposition who 'spent a great part of the night in singing and dancing through all the streets of the city.'

Bornu

The only portions of northern Negroland not included in the Songhay empire were those under the rule of Bornu and Kanem.

The people of Bornu are called Kanuris. After they had left the tribal mode of life they had kings whose seat was in Kanem, a little above Lake Chad. Kanem grew progressively until, in 1086, it obtained its first Muslim king.

In the twelfth century, under King Dunama Dibalami, the Kanuris—on the pretext of spreading the Muslim faith—began to conquer their neighbours, and so created the Kanem empire. Their territories stretched far to the northward. In the middle of the thirteenth century, still pursuing the same expansionist policy, they came into conflict with the powerful nation of the Soy, who lived far to the south. The Soy were said to be a race of giants, tall and strong. The struggle with them sapped the strength of the Kanuris, and encouraged the aristocratic element, represented by 'the twelve great offices,' to make a bid to seize state power from the monarchy.

Civil war ensued. In the midst of this came Jil Shikomemi. He was a rebellious Bornu prince who had fled among the Kuka nation

and had there made himself ruler, founding the Bulala dynasty.⁸ Spreading his dominions in every direction he came into collision with the rulers of Kanem, but was triumphant. For seventy years thereafter, while the Bulala dynasty waxed strong in Kanem, the Bornu kings in the west had no capital, until the reign of Ali Dunamami, who, having settled the internal struggle with the aristocracy, founded a new capital at Ghasreggomo. At the time Leo Africanus came to Negroland, the Bornu kingdom was still small, whereas the Bulala dynasty, which Leo called Gaoga, held sway over a large area.

Things soon changed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Edris Katakarmabi, king of Bornu, reconquered Kanem and put an end to the rule of the Bulala dynasty. From that time Kanem remained a mere province of the Bornu empire.

There followed a period of peace and progress for Bornu until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when they had to fight against the nomad Tauregs for their independence, just as, in the nineteenth century, they were to fight against the Fulanis.

The Yorubas

While Songhay and Bornu were flourishing in the north, other nations were building powerful states and kingdoms in the south as well. The Yorubas, the Ibos, the Benis, the Dahomeans, the Ashantis, and many others were developing monarchical or other forms of government, consolidating their power, and enlarging their influence.

The territory of the Yorubas, lying between Benin and Dahomey, stretched from the sea-coast to the River Niger. At what period they had begun to organize political states is not certain, but they had had a monarchy as early as A.D. 700. Theirs was a civilization with 'extraordinarily fine bronze and brass work, the art of chasing on brass, pottery, carving in wood and ivory; and well-organized states controlled by a hierarchy of nobles, somewhat in the style of the Byzantine court, headed by a semi-divine sovereign.'

Early in mediaeval times all Yorubas were under one king, who was never an absolute monarch but acted with the consent of a Council of State. In A.D. 1000 the capital of the Yoruba kingdom was transferred from Ile-Ife to Oyo; and there came a separation between the political head and the religious head of the people.

Benin

The civilization of Benin must have been very ancient, for its bronze work is said to go back before the Christian era. The Binis developed a monarchical form of government from early times, and it is known that about the year A.D. 1000 a son of the Oni (or king) of Ife started the line of the Oba (king) of Benin, whose descendants still reign.⁹

In the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese first came to Benin, they found a mature civilization. Aveiro, the first Portuguese to reach there, in 1486, described the country. He found the port of Benin, Gwato, very large, and Benin city itself beautiful: 'And the king of Benin,' he wrote, 'sent to the king [of Portugal] as ambassador a negro who was his captain in a sea port known as Ugato [Gwato], wishing to have news of our lands, the people of which had been [in Benin] considered a great novelty. This ambassador was a man of prudence and natural knowledge.' The Portuguese traded in Benin for many years.

Pereira in 1505, after describing Gwato, made reference to a great potentate in the interior—probably the Oni of Ife: 'East of Benin, 100 leagues in the interior, there is a people with a King called Likasagu, lord of many and possessed of great power; also another power whose chief amongst the negroes is like that of the Pope amongst us.' On the Forcados river, he mentions 'further inland Subon [Sobo] is very populous, then nearer the coast are negroes called Jos [Jaws] with much country. . . .'

In 1516 Durante Piries, writing to King Dom Miguel concerning his good treatment at Benin, recorded that: 'When the missionaries arrived, the King of Benin was very delighted. . . . At the end of the year, in the month of August, the king ordered his son and two of his greatest noblemen to become Christians, and built a church in Benin, and they learnt how to read and did it very well.'¹⁰

The Ibos

The neighbours of the Binis living on both sides of the Niger are the Ibos. Like other West African peoples, the Ibos had early in history acquired the art of working in iron and had become famous in it, and also in carving. Awka town, in the heart of Iboland, was especially noted for both industries. Awka smiths, carrying their

tools with them, journeyed into every part of southern Nigeria and beyond, making agricultural implements, household utensils, and guns.

Unlike their neighbours, the Ibos had no monarchical form of government. They were divided into what may be loosely called city states, each independent of the others, with all power in the assemblies of the whole people. Executive officers were elected at the beginning of every campaign. One of the earliest political maxims developed in Iboland was: 'Igbo enwere eze,' literally, 'the Ibos don't have kings,' and meaning, 'the Ibos can never submit to the hegemony of one man.'

The Coming of the European Slave Trade

Thus, by the beginning of the seventeenth century—when the European slave trade began to be a problem—most of the West African people were already organized in more or less orderly and recognizable political states. The well-to-do among them enjoyed a fairly high standard of life. The differentiation of social classes had already begun. Forms of State organization were by no means uniform: they varied from the absolute despotism of Songhay to the aristocratic government of Bornu, from the constitutional monarchy of Yoruba and Benin to the democracy of the Ibos. But whatever the form of government, order was generally maintained, and life and property were secure. And this was generally so in spite of exceptions caused by the long-established inland slave trade, conducted by Arabs for the benefit of North African and Arabian slave markets.

Leo Africanus, who had travelled much in West Africa by 1528, remarked that 'the journey indeed is very long, but yet secure and void of danger.' And Ibn Batuta, who travelled in the same region at a much earlier time, stated 'A traveller may proceed alone amongst them without the least fear of brigands, or robbers, or ravages.'

Henry Barth, talking of the empire of Songhay under Askia, noted that: 'It is of no small interest to a person who endeavours to take a comprehensive view of the various race of mankind, to observe how, during the time when the Portuguese, carried away by the most heroic enterprise and the most praiseworthy energy,

having gradually discovered and partly taken possession of the whole western coast of Africa, and, having at length doubled its southernmost promontory, under the guidance of Almeida and Albuquerque founded their Indian empire: that at this same time a negro king in the interior of the continent not only extended his conquests far and wide, from the centre of Hausa almost to the borders of the Atlantic, and from the pagan country of Mosi, in 12 degrees northern latitude as far as Tawat to the south of Morocco, but also governed the subjected tribes with justice and equity, causing well-being and comfort to spring up everywhere within the borders of his extensive dominions. . . .

Education was more widespread in parts of mediaeval West Africa than in later centuries, thanks to the influence of the Mohammedan religion. In the reign of Askia, learned men of all nations resorted to Timbuktu. Books were highly valued. In the east, Homara, lord of Gao, 'greatly honoureth all learned men.' And 'Ahmed Baba himself,' writes Henry Barth, 'the author of the history of Songhay, who gives a long list of learned natives of Negroland, may serve as a fair specimen of the learning in Timbuktu at that time. He had a library of 1600 books.'

Besides Arabic learning, it would seem that, as Europeans became better known, their languages were also studied. Dr. Olfert Dapper, a Dutchman, wrote in the seventeenth century about the town of Waori in the Lower Niger, and said that the people there were 'outwardly very religious, and can read and write, being very fond of Portuguese books, pens and paper.'

In the monarchical states, four social classes seem to have emerged. There were the king and his court; the rich merchants; the artisans in the towns; and the farmers who formed the majority of the population and lived in villages outside the towns, being farmers or herdsmen or both. The king and his nobles, as might be expected, lived a life of much ease and comfort, and sometimes of splendour. Wealthy merchants, who became perhaps the most powerful force in these states, traded from town to town in all commodities from gold to grain. They were the chief vehicle of the culture of this period, and most of the wars that were fought were to smooth their path: that is, to control caravan routes, to divert trade from a rival town, or to seize salt-bearing or gold-bearing areas. The artisans

in the towns, manufacturers of cloth, dyes and implements of production, seem generally to have been not badly off. The class that bore the whole burden of the luxuries of the rich—the kings, nobles and merchants—was that of the farmers, who were generally impoverished.

Leo Africanus records of Bornu: 'The king seemeth to be marvelous rich, for his spurs, his bridles, platters, dishes, pots, and other vessels wherein his meat and drink are brought to the table are all of pure gold also.' Upon the plains in sundry villages were rich merchants. The king maintained a large army, both cavalry and foot-soldiers, and all were maintained by the tithes paid by the subjects. 'The mountains being inhabited by herdsmen and shepherds, do bring forth millet and other grain . . . the inhabitants in summer go all naked save their privy members which they cover with a piece of leather; but all winter they are clad in skins, and have beds of skins also.'

The early visitors to Benin, in the middle of the fifteenth century, were surprised by the general luxury of the king's court; but noted that the noblemen of the country, while also living a luxurious life, 'did no stroke of work and appeared to be lazy.'

At the time when Gao was the centre of the Songhay empire, the gap between the social classes was just as wide as elsewhere. This is what Leo saw: 'It is a wonder to see what plenty of merchandise is daily brought hither, and how costly and sumptuous all things be.' There were horses from Europe worth a great sum, scarlet of Venice, or Turkish cloth of great price; swords, spurs, bridles, spices. But 'the residue of this kingdom,' he continues, 'containeth naught but villages and hamlets inhabited by husbandmen and shepherds, who in winter cover their bodies with beasts' skins; but in summer they go naked save for their privy members: and sometimes they wear upon their feet certain shoes made of camels leather. They are ignorant rude people, and you shall scarce find one learned man in the space of an hundred miles. They are continually burdened with grievous exactions, so that they have scarce anything remaining to live upon.' The contrast between the rich and the poor was very marked.

The organization of West Africa in the Middle Ages had many elements of feudalism in it but for all that was not strictly feudal.

Kings and nobles lived on the tithes of produce and other taxes in kind levied on the people, yet they did not own the land. The people owned their lands, holding them generally in common. The more strictly feudal ownership of land was a development of a later period, the nineteenth century, with the Foulah revolution. Nowhere at this period was ownership of the land vested in the monarch.

The Slave Trade

The development of West African life, though holding so much promise, was greatly retarded by the slave trade, which assumed, under European influence, huge proportions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although it had long existed to a smaller extent in the inland areas under Fulani and Arab influence.

Slavery had indeed existed from remotest antiquity among all peoples. When Israel was yet small in numbers Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelite merchants by his own brothers. The Greeks in the hey-day of their civilization lived on the labour of slaves; and it was the same with Rome. In West Africa there was slavery in the Middle Ages. Prisoners captured in war were not killed but sold by their captors. But the wars were not fought for the purpose of taking slaves; enslavement was only secondary to conquest.

The character of slavery, however, changed when European colonies in Central America, Brazil and the West Indies required labour for their mines and plantations. Then slavery became a trade, and human beings became commodities, in the fullest sense of these words.

It was discovered that negro slaves were very suitable for work in the mines and plantations on account of their great physical endurance, as they often survived where Red Indian slaves and white labourers died off. So there grew up a great demand for negro slaves, and large numbers began to be imported from 1501. As the normal sources of supply could not meet the demand, Europeans went over to direct raiding of the West African coast, and carrying people off. The Portuguese were the first to start these slave raids, but others soon joined them. They settled the coasts, built strong forts, and from these sallied inland in search of human booty.

In 1662, during the reign of Charles II, an English company was

formed called 'The Company of Royal Adventurers of England trading to Africa.' The members of this company entered into an agreement with the King of Spain to supply his colonies in the Indies with 144,000 negro slaves within thirty years, that is to say, 4,800 slaves per year.

By this time almost all the maritime European nations had joined in the lucrative trade. The raids on West African towns became general, and were made with increasing fury and recklessness. In 1690 the first ship-load of slaves arrived in Virginia and slavery spread rapidly also in the North American continent, and further increased the demand for negroes.

This terrible trade grew very large. Its centre throughout the eighteenth century was Great Britain, and its chief port was Liverpool. E. D. Morel, in his memorable book *The Black Man's Burden*, published by the National Labour Press in 1919, showed that the number of slaves imported by the British alone into British, French, and Spanish-American colonies between 1666 and 1766 may be estimated at something like three millions. From then until the end of the century the number of slaves imported into all the American colonies seems to have been about 70,000 a year, the British having the largest share. Liverpool was the port which profited most. Between 1783 and 1793, '921 Liverpool ships were employed in the conveying of slaves. They carried 313,737 slaves of the total value of £15,186,850. After deducting 15 per cent under divers heads, the net return to Liverpool in those eleven years amounted to £12,294,116. . . .' No wonder Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1775, could say: 'We cannot allow the Colonies to check or to discourage in any degree a traffic so beneficial to the nation.'

To Europeans the slave trade was thus immensely lucrative. In the West Indies and the Americas fabulous fortunes were made by those who utilized negro slave labour in the production of sugar, rum, tobacco, cotton, and in mining.

But not every European had a direct interest in slave trading or benefited from it. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, when industrialism had diminished the relative value of trade plantations, many were moved by humanitarian feelings. They were shocked at the stories which began to come through of the

inhuman treatment of the negro slaves, and the awful wastage of life among them as they were transported in 'hell ships' to the Americas—sometimes more than two-thirds of them perishing on the way, either by disease, or by maltreatment, or by merely being thrown overboard to lighten the ships. A great debate ensued in England, the centre of the trade, on whether it should be abolished or not. Many who formerly supported it began to veer round and condemn it, and this notably included the Church.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the mass of the British people took a hand in the controversy and demanded the immediate abolition of the trade in slaves. Public meetings were held, demonstrations, articles in the Press, many means of popular pressure were used in support of this demand. Petitions against the inhuman traffic were organized and forwarded to the House of Commons.

In 1831 these petitions were signed by nearly one-and-a-half million persons. 'So great was the weight of the rolls on which the petition was drawn up that Sir Thomas Buxton to whom they were entrusted for presentation to the House of Commons, was unable to convey them alone.'¹¹

Two years later, in 1833, the British Parliament, passed under popular pressure an Act abolishing slavery in all British colonies, and making compensation to former slave-holders.

Nevertheless, illegal traffic in slaves continued in the British colonies, carried on by the Portuguese and the Spaniards; and by British subjects and Americans who disguised themselves as Spaniards. To stop these foreign nationals and British subjects, who continued to go to the West African Coast and thereby to disrupt British trade, the British Government began to despatch men-of-war to West African waters to hunt down the slavers. Later, by agreement among themselves, all Europeans ceased to deal in slaves; and slave-raiding and slave-hunting were stopped altogether in Africa by the close of the nineteenth century.

For the West African peoples the slave trade was a great misfortune. Millions were carried away from their homes during the continuance of the trade. Wars promoted by the slavers who supplied guns and ammunition ravaged the country. Suspicion and mistrust became universal. Nations split up into small units each

afraid of its neighbour. Friendly intercourse between peoples became rare. Fields were left untilled, towns were depopulated, people were driven from their homes by the flames of war, and forced to live in caves and mountains, and were thrown back into barbarism. Slavery became a part of life and hunting for slaves a normal occupation.

MacGregor Laird, who visited West Africa after the abolition of the slave trade, was constantly frustrated in his attempts to do normal trade because of the extensive contraband slave traffic still carried on by his countrymen, together with the Spaniards, the Portuguese, and the Americans. He commented bitterly: 'That Great Britain is deeply indebted to Africa for wrongs inflicted on her, may perhaps be as readily granted. . . . From the commencement of the sixteenth century to that of the nineteenth in protecting and fostering the slave trade—by legislative enactments, in granting premiums to the importer and bounties to the slave holder, we endeavoured by all means in our power to demoralize and disorganize Africa. During that time we have been the means of destroying life to a frightful extent—of desolating whole districts, of annihilating all the domestic relations. . . . We have refused to take anything from them but slaves, and have turned round and reproached them with indolence in not cultivating their own soil. . . . We have abused them for idleness while fattening upon their labour, and have turned round with the Pharisee and said "God, I thank thee, I am not such as these." '12

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century West Africa: Eve of European Conquest

It says much for the resilience of the West African peoples that the calamity of the slave trade did not completely destroy their community life. Those not directly affected by it lived on as before but on a restricted scale, for people had less and less to do with their neighbours. Between two states there might be war and anarchy, but within a state there would usually be order.

A significant result of this slave trade was the growth of the slave population in the towns, and the increasing use of slave-labour in production. In Kano town, for example, in the early nineteenth century there were many slaves to every free man. The Fulanis had

slave villages where their slaves lived and tilled the soil and tended the cattle for them, while they themselves lived a life of ease in the towns. In this period cities became fortified with walls, and people went to work with arms in hand. Villages lived within the protection of the chief's castle, just as in Europe during the wars of the Middle Ages. At Ewari, now part of Nigeria, Commander Clapperton saw the house of the chief, which was like a walled village with a large clay castle at one end. This served as the family house of the chief. 'The other houses in the enclosure,' he said, 'are huts, occupied by blacksmiths, weavers, tailors, dyers, etc., all belonging to his household.'

The Ashantis

The two most important developments of this period were the rise of Ashanti as a great power, and the Fulani invasion.

The Ashanti nation had become quite strong as far back as the sixteenth century, but not until the seventeenth did they begin to expand beyond their own frontiers. They began to do this under their king Osei Tutu, who made Kumasi the Ashanti capital in about 1700. They carried on a series of campaigns against neighbouring states, and reduced these one after the other. The driving force behind their movement was a desire to control the northern caravan routes leading to Sokoto and Bornu, over which much trade was carried, and to control the coastal regions on the Atlantic (for the Ashantis were an inland people) in order to share directly in the trade with Europe. In short, their object was to control the rich resources of that area of West Africa we now call the Gold Coast.

They pushed their conquests as far north as the Kong mountains, and in the south reduced Aki, Assin Kwatu and the Fantis. There was one state which defied them for some time and that was Denkara; but after a struggle lasting two years Denkara also lost its independence. Osei Tutu died in a campaign at Kormantine, and was succeeded by his brother Osei Poku, an equally warlike man, under whom the Ashantis rounded off their conquests. He died in 1742 and by that time the Kingdom of Ashanti stretched from Assin to the River Volta and from the Kong mountains to the sea, and was set on becoming one of the most powerful states in West Africa.

But by their conquests the Ashantis had come face to face with the Dutch and the British, two peoples who had exactly the same designs as they, that is, to control the riches of the Gold Coast. The Dutch soon retired from the scene and only the British remained.

In 1807 the Ashantis joined battle with the British, whom they were to fight intermittently for the next seventy years.

This seventy years' struggle for the control of the Gold Coast was finally decided in 1874. A British force marched on the Ashanti capital. 'War was declared,' writes Bruce in *Round Africa*, 'and Sir Garnet Wolseley appointed commander of the English forces. After a number of petty engagements, it was at length decided to march to Kumasi, and punish the African in his own stronghold. It was a fearful march inland . . . the march was almost one continuous engagement, and often, too, with an invisible foe. We fought sometimes for an hour or two without seeing an enemy, for they were so skilfully concealed that we could only direct our aim to those parts from whence the shots came. They were not wanting in courage, for we found it no easy matter to drive them back upon their own capital; but the victory of Amaopil, obtained in January 1874, quite broke their forces, and soon after we entered Kumasi . . . The capital was burnt, and the power of the Ashantis, if not entirely destroyed, was for a long period crippled.'

The Fulanis

The Fulanis, or Foulahs, were scattered all over West Africa. At the beginning of the nineteenth century some of them were living in the province of Gober, tending their cattle, and paying tribute to its sovereign. Then a holy man arose among them, Othman dan Fodio, called 'Othman the learned son of Fodio.'

This remarkable man was said to be a master of all Arabic learning, and to speak fluently many of the languages of West Africa. He certainly knew the Koran and all its commentaries. His people acclaimed him a prophet and made him a Sheik. Many Fulanis gathered round him and soon their growing numbers began to cause friction between them and the Goberawa (the people of Gober). Then Othman began to give opinions on how the country should be run, and to make public criticisms of Government measures. That was too much for the rulers of Gober. They ordered

him to quit, him and all the Fulanis. When they refused to obey they were forcibly ejected.

The Fulanis took this hardly. The expulsion was not only a slight to their prophet, who was a man of vastly better gifts and acquirements than the king of Gober, but was also the cause of much hardship to themselves, for the Fulanis at this time were poor. They decided to resist: Othman organized them into companies and put them under commanders. Then, exhorting them in the name of God and the Prophet, he bade them go forth and conquer the infidels, and take their land and property to themselves, since it was written that the property of the unbelievers belonged to the true believers. Thus fortified by religious faith, and spurred on by their empty pockets, the Fulanis attacked Gober in 1807, and the Fulani (or Foulah) invasion began.

For some time the Fulanis suffered severe reverses. Egged on by Othman with his religious songs (many of which still exist today) and by the promise of a paradise here on earth if they should win, or by one in heaven if they should happen to be killed, they fought like fury, and soon the tide turned in their favour. The powerful city of Kano fell before them, and then Gober and then other towns in rapid succession.

As their successes grew so their numbers increased, for Fulanis flocked from every part of West Africa to serve under the banner of Othman dan Fodio. They overran the entire Hausa country: Kebbi, Zaria, Yauri, Nupe fell under their domination. Relying on their cavalry, they sacked town after town. The struggle for Katsina, the flower of the Hausa states, was bloody and protracted.

The conquering Fulanis swept on from victory to victory. They attacked Bornu in the east, and Yorubaland in the south. But the Yorubas took swift and bitter action to avert their impending loss of independence. They put to death all Mohammedans within their territory, and offered stout resistance to the oncoming Fulanis. The Yorubas were not impressed by the claim 'that God had given to the faithful their lands and houses and their wives and children to be slaves.' Nevertheless, they lost a large part of their northern territories, including Ilorin, to the Fulanis, who once even entered Oyo, the capital, and burnt down a great part of it, giving liberty

to all Mohammedan slaves, and encouraging others to kill their pagan masters and join them.

When Othman dan Fodio died in 1817 the Fulani conquest had spent its force, although up to the end of the nineteenth century the Fulanis continued their forays into neighbouring states, and kept up their desolation of towns and villages. The Fulani empire stretched then from the territories on the Niger above Borgu to the borders of Bornu, and southward to Lokoja and the Yoruba country.

Othman divided this empire into two, assigning the eastern portion—Katsina, Kubbi, Gwari, Zamfra, Kano, Gober, Katongora, Womba, part of Adamawa, etc.—to his son Mohammed Bello, with the capital at Sokoto; and the western portion, with the capital at Gando, to his brother Allahi; this western half including Kebbi, Mauri, Zaberma, Dendira, Gurma, part of Borgu and Yorubaland, Ilorin and Nupe.

But the death of Othman was the signal for a general revolt of the subject peoples of the Fulanis. Zamfra was the first to rise, then Gwari, Gasina, Gober all joined. They formed a confederation called the Towia. Youri, Kubbi, Daura, southern Zegzeg all entered the confederation. The struggle was long and bitter.

For the remainder of the nineteenth century, the Fulanis had to fight everywhere in order to maintain their rule, but with less and less success. Their rule was actually tottering when the British entered the country at the beginning of this century; and some states had even succeeded in breaking away.

'Indirect Rule'

The British, who took over the greater part of the Fulani dominions (now comprised in northern Nigeria) in return for the submission of the Fulani rulers, secured them in their position: so that the struggling Hausas, and the other subject peoples of the Fulani empire, were now faced by two Powers instead of one—the Fulanis and the British. This alliance with the Fulani rulers the British termed 'indirect rule,' or 'ruling on African principles.'

'If dangerous revolts are to be obviated,' wrote Sir Taubman Goldie, 'the general policy of ruling on African principles through native rulers must be followed for the present. . . .'

His successor, Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard, elaborated this

policy and tried to apply it to a wider area, to what is now southern Nigeria. Where there had never been kings with absolute powers, these were set up and given absolute power by British bayonets. In countries like Iboland, where there was no tradition of kingship, individuals with equivalent powers were set up by the British, and called 'Warrant Chiefs'—that is, Chiefs by virtue of British 'warrants.' This experiment was to prove a dismal failure, for the eastern Nigerians would not stand such arbitrary rule.

This system of propping up absolute rulers, and of trying to create an artificial ruling class—known as Indirect Rule—was received with general praise in European countries and was hailed as a brilliant contribution to political science.

The Fulanis had established throughout their dominions a feudal type of organization. The Government was autocratic and absolute. Governors were appointed to the provinces who virtually owned their areas, except that they were removable at the Sultan's pleasure (Mohammed Bello, the son of Othman dan Fodio, and his uncle Abd Allahi, were called Sultans, and so were their successors). These Governors collected tribute from their provinces, part of which they then paid to the Sultans. Peasant farmers, although not owned like serfs, paid rent for their lands in the form of produce; sometimes as much as two-thirds of their annual produce was taken from them. No peasant could plant land until he had obtained permission from his Governor. Inhabitants of towns paid taxes in money on their manufactures; and every town, on being visited by the Governor, was required to entertain him and his officers; to bear the expense of his travelling to the next town, and, as well, to feed all his servants and cattle.

The Loss of West African Independence

Recapitulating, we see that in the fifteenth century the Portuguese began to explore the west coast, and to trade with the people. After the Reformation other European nations, ignoring the Papal Bull, broke their monopoly, so that apart from the Portuguese we had the English, the French, and the Dutch trading there. The most important commodity they wanted was slaves.

First the Europeans traded in their ships, moving from place to place along the coast. Then they began to take land and to build

fortified settlements on African soil, using these settlements to trade with the people of the country. The Portuguese were the first to build such settlements at Elmina, Lagos, Warri, Calabar and the Cameroons River. Other nations followed suit. Among themselves, these settlements changed hands continually.

For a long time the Europeans were content to trade just on the coast. Later, they began to desire to penetrate inland, believing that direct trade with the interior people would bring more profit. But they knew nothing of the interior apart from what they had heard by travellers' tales.

In 1788 a society was founded in England by a group of wealthy people for the purpose of exploring the interior of Africa, particularly the course of the River Niger which, they believed, was the gateway to the heart of the Sudan. This society was called the African Association. Under its auspices, Mungo Park located the Niger in 1796. And the brothers Lander, in 1832, finally traced it to where it flowed into the ocean. Other travellers explored other parts of the country, some being under the auspices of the British Government. They all made reports of what they saw, and the general opinion was that the Niger offered undreamt-of opportunities to European enterprise; and that if West Africans offered any resistance it wouldn't be much, since they had been badly shaken by the slave trade. 'Even if these people were inclined to oppose the occupation of different points on the banks of the river by our countrymen,' wrote MacGregor Laird, 'they are incapacitated from doing so effectually on account of the disorganized state of the country.'¹³

West Africans did indeed view this influx of European travellers in the nineteenth century with considerable suspicion. Mohammed Bello, Sultan of Sokoto, told Commander Clapperton that he had been informed that he (Clapperton) was a spy, 'hinting at the same time,' wrote Clapperton, 'that it would be better I should die, as the English had taken possession of all India by first going there by ones and twos, until we got strong enough to seize upon the whole country.'¹⁴

The Eve of European Occupation

What was the internal state of West Africa at this time?

The country was split up into little independent states, it is true, each jealously guarding its independence from the others, and occasionally making forays into its neighbours' territories either to capture slaves or to retaliate for similar raids made on its own; and the Fulanis, in what is now northern Nigeria, continued their work of destruction. But within each state there was orderly government, and within the towns the work of civilization continued.

Manufactures reached a high stage of development and, though there were as yet no machines, manufactories had begun to develop. At Jannah, in the Yoruba country, Clapperton saw a manufactory containing ten looms. 'Their cloth is good in texture,' he wrote, 'and some very fine.' The manufacture of cloth was indeed very general in West Africa, and, with dyeing, was an old industry. Hamilton, in the lecture on 'The River Niger' already referred to, said: 'Throughout the country [West Africa] cotton and indigo are cultivated, and in many towns there is an extensive manufacture of cotton cloth, noted for its excellent quality and the durability of the dye, which latter equals, if it does not excel, anything done in Manchester; as witness the specimens I have here, one of which has been in use for twenty-five years as a table cloth and the dye, as can be seen, is none the worse for all the washing it has undergone.'

The making of gold trinkets and other ornaments had been developed to a high degree. At a market in Oyo, Richard and John Lander (1832) saw a variety of beads, among them 'the famous Agra bead, which at . . . other places, is good for its weight in gold, and which has vainly been attempted to be imitated by the Italians and our own countrymen.'

Soap-making was already established. Even in the Middle Ages the translator of the History of Leo Africanus could write, 'Here [on the Guinea Coast] is made of oil and ashes of the palm tree, a kind of soap, which hath double the force of ours.'

Leatherwork was a speciality of Sokoto, as the manufacture of cotton cloth and dyeing were that of Kano; fine cushions, bags and sandals were also made there.

Silk manufacture went hand in hand with that of cotton cloth. Dr. Henry Barth saw some cloths made of silk. 'Some of these robes,' he wrote, 'consist half of home-made silk, obtained from a peculiar kind of silk-worm, which lives on the tamarind tree.'

Copper, bronze and brass work maintained their high standard of workmanship. The manufacture of iron was advanced considerably; all over West Africa there were iron-smelting houses. One of these was visited in 1904 by an Englishman, Mr. C. V. Bellamy, who described the African process of iron-making in a paper to the Iron and Steel Institute in London. 'Not the least important feature in this industry,' he said, 'is the marked regularity which characterized each operation and the enthusiasm which seemed to inspire the workers . . . There is nothing to suggest, in the character of their implements or appliances, that they have been in any way influenced by suggestions from the outside world.'

In the general discussion which followed the reading of this paper, and the analysis of the samples of West African iron exhibited, Mr. H. Bauerman, an honorary member, said: 'This is an extremely interesting paper, because it brings before us a line of work with which we have been all entirely unfamiliar up to the present time. It is generally assumed that the making of steel was a later process than the making of wrought iron. This paper shows us very distinctly a primitive process that is really a steel-making one. The metal is not puddled steel, but a natural forged steel, high in carbon, which, by reheating, is brought down to a one-per-cent tool steel. This is essentially steel-making; and although we have known that in the older regions of the world, before the introduction of bellows, furnaces were worked by natural draught as shown in this paper, the author shows us that they made steel as well as wrought iron. . . .'¹⁵

Agriculture generally was prosperous. 'We passed over extensive tobacco fields,' writes Barth, 'which had very nearly reached maturity. Rich aromatic bushes were growing everywhere in the fields, affording the most nourishing food for bees, for which purpose hives, formed of thick hollow logs, were fastened to the branches of the colossal kuka-trees.'

Mungo Park saw 'a large town called Kabba situated in the midst of a beautiful and highly cultivated country; bearing a greater resemblance to the centre of England, than what I should have supposed had been the middle of Africa.' At Kirwani, he saw that 'the inhabitants seem to have carried the system of agriculture to some degree of perfection; for they collect the dung of their cattle

into large heaps during the dry season, for the purpose of manuring their land with it at the proper time. . . .¹⁶

Boat building was an important industry. 'The Ibo people,' wrote the Landers, 'are also famous for making large canoes, and all those of the different rivers, from Benin to Calabar, are constructed by them.'

Music and dancing formed an important part of the life of the West African peoples. At Fundah, Laird records great crowds went to watch the sports—wrestling, horse-racing, etc. 'The walls of the town were crowded with spectators,' he wrote, 'and the road leading to the town was lined with an immense multitude of persons. The sport commenced with horse-racing.'

Women already took a prominent part in public life. They were great traders and already controlled the retail trade in almost all the towns of the south, and owned fleets of canoes on the River Niger.

Education was not neglected in spite of the insecurity of the times, and schools of learning were still found in all the important towns. At Masena, capital of Bagirma, Barth came across a blind old man: 'This was the first conversation I had with this man . . . I could scarcely have expected to find in this out of the way place a man not only versed in all the branches of Arabic literature, but who had even read, nay, possessed a manuscript of those portions of Aristotle and Plato which had been translated into Arabic.'

That a well-ordered life was not the monopoly of the biggest towns, but was general throughout West Africa, appears from the observations of travellers concerning the other parts of the territory.

Mungo Park wrote of Segou, in what is now the French Sudan: 'The view of this extensive city; the numerous canoes upon the river; the crowded population, and the cultivated state of the surrounding country, formed altogether a prospect of civilization and magnificence, which I little expected to find in the bosom of Africa.'

Of nineteenth-century Timbuktu, Barth wrote: 'I was not a little surprised at the populous and wealthy character which this quarter of the town, the Sane-Gungu, exhibited, many of the houses rising to the height of two stories, and in their façade evincing even an attempt at architectural adornment.'

Down the River Niger to the sea the scene was generally the same—orderliness, civilization, good taste. The Landers, first Europeans to cross the Ibo country, wrote: 'The little we could see of the houses with which the shore is interspersed, gave us a very favourable impression of the judgment and cleanliness of the inhabitants of the town. They are neatly built of yellow clay, plastered over, and thatched with palm leaves; yards sprucely fenced are annexed to each of them, in which plantains, bananas, and cocoa trees grow, exhibiting a pleasing sight, and affording a delightful shade . . . we got out and walked to a house, similar to those which we have already mentioned as having seen from the river. There was a little verandah supported by wooden columns in front, and on the floor mats had been placed for our accommodation. Indeed its whole appearance was so clean and comfortable, and it likewise had such an appearance of neatness and simplicity about it, differing entirely from anything of the kind which we had seen for a long time, that we were quite pleased with our new abode.'

Farther down the river, near the mouth, they found the same condition prevailing. 'The villages that we passed in the course of the day were very numerous . . . The houses seem to be built of a light-coloured clay, and being thatched with palm branches, they very much resemble our own cottages.'

In the Cameroons the same quality of ordered and civic life greeted the European new-comers. 'We entered the great basin of Cameroons river,' wrote MacGregor Laird. '. . . In the morning we went ashore to visit King Aqua . . . After viewing his house, which was of two stories, with a gallery surrounding it outside, we walked through the town, which in order and beauty far exceeded anything I had yet seen in Africa. . . The principal street is about three-quarters of a mile in length, about 40 yards wide, perfectly straight, and the houses being all upon the same plan, give it a regular and handsome appearance.'

This was the state of West Africa when British merchants sailed up the Lower Niger. Soon French and German merchants were also on the scene. Rivalries between these three Powers led to the calling of a conference in Berlin in 1884, named *The West African Conference*. At this conference the Powers settled their differences,

and entered into an agreement among themselves that any of them which could prove that it had entered into treaties with any of the West African States should have the monopoly of the trade with those parts, without interference from the others. So began the scramble for treaties. Emissaries of the various governments trudged up and down the country offering bribes and getting pieces of paper signed which the Africans never took seriously.

'The Powers, in their haste to declare the "spheres of influence" which they claimed, had not in some cases time to go through the formality of making treaties with the natives, and considered it sufficient to notify that they claimed them as hinterlands, or because they had some special interest in them.'

Another agreement at this conference was that no European pioneer should sell any more arms to the Africans, and this, writes Lugard, had 'the practical result of rendering the African more powerless than ever to resist conquest by Europeans.'

There remains to give the briefest outline of the events which separated European invasion from contemporary times. In 1898 Britain entered into a convention with France defining the boundaries between British and French spheres, and in 1899 a similar convention with Germany. These two conventions brought the 'scramble for Africa' to a close. West Africa assumed the patchwork appearance which it now has. England took what is now the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. The French had most of the rest.

Having carved up the country among themselves, the European Powers then tried to assert their authority and to enter into 'effective occupation' of their various areas. It was then that West Africans awoke to their plight and defended their freedom with arms. But the weapons of the Europeans were vastly superior, and the resistance of the Africans was drowned in blood. Cities and towns were destroyed; whole populations were reduced. Sir George Taubman Goldie, who took a prominent part in these proceedings, was annoyed that after the destruction of Bida, in Nigeria, one newspaper in England should express uneasiness 'at the morality of mowing down natives with artillery and Maxim guns.'¹⁷

The European invaders even sometimes taunted one another with their ruthless destruction. A pamphlet published in Brussels, entitled

Southern Nigeria and the English 'Humanitarians,' contained a gibe at E. D. Morel, than whom none had done more to expose the horrors of Belgian occupation in the Congo. 'We may be allowed,' it said, 'to wonder why Mr. Morel, who is so anxious about the fate of the natives in French and Belgian Congo, does not display the same activity when other parts of Africa are concerned, especially those over which the Union Jack is flying. Why does he not glance at southern Nigeria for instance? The natives there are, as in the Congo, extremely savage and the country has had, during the last four months, seven (we rightly say seven) military expeditions sent to it. Following the military law in force in Africa, many villages were burnt and destroyed, and large numbers of peaceful inhabitants were massacred or left to die of hunger. Why is Mr. Morel's indignation not roused by this process of introducing civilization into a black country? It is perhaps because the authors of the process are the proprietors of the English factories, agents of the renowned Niger Company, who complain of the fact that the natives are not willing enough to second them in their business. We think we shall be assisting Mr. Morel by pointing out to him these facts, the truth of which can easily be proved.'¹⁸ Morel, in truth, was among the few against whom such taunts could not possibly be justified.

By the beginning of the First World War, the military conquest of West Africa was complete. No part of the country remained independent, except perhaps Liberia.

Today, however, throughout West Africa, there is a resurgence of the fight for independence, growing ever deeper and wider. Once that independence is achieved, it will be possible for West Africans to collect the materials about their country, now scattered in various European countries and elsewhere; to unearth the evidence of their past which now lies buried in their soil; and, combining these with popular tradition, properly to reconstruct the true history of the West African peoples.

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CHAPTER III

Towards Self-Government in British West Africa

OVER the past fifty years the British West African colonies have indeed become modern societies. They have become 'modern' in the sense not only that West Africans use corrugated iron for their roofing, dress in Lancashire cloth, go to the pictures if they live in or near a town, ride bicycles if they can afford them, and travel in lorries and trams; but also in a more important sense—that the West African economy has become closely tied up with the economies of Britain and the U.S.A.; and that an increasing proportion of the population works for profit, salaries or wages, not for subsistence. Towns like Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu, Port Hartcourt and Kano have been growing in size and influence. The development of education, slow though it has been, has thrown up a new intelligentsia. The emergence of an African Press has led to the diffusion of political ideas among large sections of the people formerly regarded as 'non-political.'

These changes help to explain the breaking down of traditional ties and loyalties and the substitution for them of new attachments and interests. Traditionally, though there were many variations in the forms of social organization existing in West Africa, a man's main loyalty was to his family, his lineage, his ancestors, his tribe, his chief. Religious beliefs were closely associated with these loyalties and gave them support and sanction. In those areas (like northern Nigeria) in which Islam in some form predominated, Moslem solidarity possessed a special force of its own, to some extent cutting across family and tribal ties.

These attachments still have importance and influence in contemporary West Africa, but they survive within a social framework in which new loyalties based upon economic status and social class have emerged; and in which new types of organization—political parties, trade unions, farmers' unions, traders' associations, women's

unions, youth organizations, dissident Churches and the like—have been built up to serve new purposes.

‘Europe’s commerce and its money-measurements really have brought the African into a new world. Its economics are different from his “primitive economics”; its personal relationships have nothing to do with his relationships of matrilineal families and tribal kinship. His religion does not in any way reinforce or govern the capitalism into which he has been swept. He retains something of his old social and religious and mental life and habit—these things are very slow in dying—but they are distinct from his new economic life and habit.’¹

There is unfortunately little written evidence on which to base any precise account of the social structure of ‘modern’ West African society. Since, however, it is impossible to discuss the political situation in these countries without some reference to the relationship between social classes and political alignments, an effort has to be made to give a picture, even if it be impressionistic, of the present position.

First, the larger chiefs or ‘natural rulers’—a Yoruba Oba, a Fulani Amir, or an Ashanti paramount chief—can be regarded as having their own distinct status and interests. Since in most parts of West Africa, outside the Amirates of northern Nigeria, chiefs are not hereditary, but elected from certain chiefly families, they do not constitute an aristocracy set apart from the rest of the community in the same way as, say, the Indian princes. None the less they have a larger stake than others in the survival of the traditional social order, since on this depends the survival of chiefly power. They tend, too, to enjoy particularly close relations with the British administration, to whom they are accustomed to turn for support if difficulties arise in their relations with their subjects. While not necessarily very wealthy they are, for the most part, able to indulge in ‘conspicuous consumption’—on food and drink, wives, servants, motor cars, etc.

The most prominent among them receive salaries from public funds which, by West African standards at any rate, put them in the top income class. The Amir of Kano, for example, receives a

salary of £6,000 a year, with an establishment allowance of £3,000. The Sultan of Sokoto receives the same salary, with an establishment allowance of £1,500. The Alake of Abeokuta receives £2,520 a year, and the Asantihene (the 'king' of Ashanti) enjoys emoluments from all sources (including Kumasi ground rents) amounting to about £8,000.² Some chiefs (like the Alake of Abeokuta or the Oni of Ife) have increased their personal wealth by trade, cocoa farming or other forms of business enterprise, somewhat in the way in which members of the British aristocracy preserve themselves from penury by becoming company directors. Moreover, through institutions such as the Northern and Western Houses of Chiefs in Nigeria, and the Asanteman Council in the Gold Coast, they have the opportunity to arrive at, and express, a collective 'chiefly' attitude to the questions of the day.³

The development of a capitalist economy, and the existence of opportunities for a higher education, have brought into being a new middle class, consisting partly of relatively wealthy entrepreneurs, cocoa-brokers, timber merchants, owners of bus companies, etc.; partly of members of those professions which carry with them good incomes and social status—e.g. lawyers, doctors, higher civil servants. This class, though not numerically large, is politically of considerable importance. It has supplied most of the leaders of the national movement in its earlier phases.

While some 'natural rulers' are unsympathetic towards nationalism, seeing in it a force that must be disruptive of traditional social relations, the new middle class is in the main nationalist in outlook, but its nationalism is of a conservative kind. Its members, being men of substance, are anxious to ensure that the right of self-determination is reconciled with the rights of property. They wish to see the transfer of power from European to African hands, provided this can be accomplished without what they regard as the dangers of 'mob rule.'

The same social processes have also produced a numerically much larger lower middle class, or 'petty-bourgeoisie.' Under this head can be included the small traders, lorry drivers, smaller cocoa-brokers, produce buyers, shopkeepers and middlemen of various kinds; as well as the 'salaried'—clerks in Government and Native Authority offices and European, Syrian and Indian firms; school-

teachers, journalists, nurses; foremen and supervisors in the mines, railways, Public Works Department, etc. Economically the standard of the West African salary-earner is much more depressed than that of their opposite numbers in Britain. Not only are actual incomes much lower; at the same time family commitments tend to be much larger: most salaried workers have a large circle of relatives who, by custom and tradition, look to them for financial help.

Educationally, this class consists of people who have had primary, and, in the case of the salary-earner, usually some secondary, schooling; and who are therefore English-speaking. This means that they can, and do, read books, pamphlets, and newspapers, and exchange ideas with people from language groups other than their own. (Among them must also be included a quite large, but fluctuating, number of the educated unemployed.) It is principally from this class that the national and local leadership of the more radical political organizations (e.g. the Convention People's Party in the Gold Coast) tends to be drawn. In the case of the 'petty-bourgeoisie' the combination of economic and political grievances gives an edge to their nationalism which is normally lacking in the outlook of the 'men of property.'

In all four West African territories there is now a working, or wage-earning, class, consisting in the main of those employed in the mines, on the railways, in plantations (e.g. in the Cameroons), on timber production, on public works, etc. Industrialization has made so little progress that there are still very few actual factory workers (in cigarette and soap factories, breweries and the like). For the same reason the majority of wage-earners are unskilled, though included among them are some, e.g. engine-drivers and colliery hewers, employed on highly skilled jobs. Wage rates vary from 9d. to 3s. per day for unskilled workers to between 4s. and 8s. per day for skilled tradesmen. Most wage-earners are illiterate, though by no means for this reason lacking in political understanding. They have indeed increasingly over the past ten years begun through Trade Unions and Trades Councils to develop a recognition of their common economic interests; and have shown the capacity, by strikes and by other means, to struggle for improvements in their standard of life. (The wage-earning class cannot, of course, be identified exactly with trade unionists—of whom there are about

100,000 in Nigeria, and about 40,000 in the Gold Coast—since many trade unionists are salaried workers, and not all wage-earners are members of a trade union.)

The working-class has already produced some leaders of West African nationalism. But, except at times of crisis—such as the shooting of the Enugu miners in 1949—its impact upon the national movement has so far been limited, both by the smallness of its numbers and by the relative weakness of its organization.

By far the largest social class in West Africa is, of course, the class of peasant farmers. It is estimated that about 75 per cent of the total working population of Nigeria and the Gold Coast depend primarily upon farming for a livelihood—producing food for subsistence and for a local market, or cash crops (cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts, etc.) for export. It must be remembered that the economic position of farmers varies greatly: some are rich men; others are not far from the starvation line. The economy associated with export crops, cocoa in particular, has led to increasing economic differentiation within the farming community. At one end of the scale there are large farmers, owning several farms, employing hired labour, with gross incomes of £700 a year or more, often carrying out the functions of cocoa-broker, middleman and money-lender in addition to farm management: at the other end a large body of small farmers, with gross incomes of £20 or less, frequently carrying a heavy burden of debt.⁴ The farming community also includes a considerable number of labourers (many of them immigrants from the north or from French West Africa), working for wages for the larger farmers. Politically it is the larger farmers with trading interests that normally play a leading part in Farmers' Unions and the like, and represent the farming interest on the various official boards and committees. The smaller farmers have so far (except in parts of the Gold Coast, under the influence of the Convention People's Party) been left largely 'voiceless' in West Africa.

This very general account of social classes in West Africa—while it would need amplification and amendment before it could be applied to any individual colony or region—throws light upon present-day political relationships. Nationalism, in both the Gold Coast and Nigeria, originated as an alliance between chiefs and the

new middle class. Later it became an affair of the middle class, with support from the 'petty-bourgeoisie,' and with the chiefs standing aloof. It has now begun to develop the characteristics of a more broadly based popular movement, drawing its main support from the 'petty-bourgeoisie,' the peasantry and the working-class.

The Causes of Nationalism

In a recent book, *Attitude to Africa*, there occurs the following statement: 'The basis of African nationalism is an emotional affinity between Africans on grounds of colour.' To say this is about as illuminating as to say that the basis of Italian nationalism in the time of Mazzini and Garibaldi was an emotional affinity between Italians on grounds of language. In fact the national movements of West Africa are complex in character. They draw their strength from many sources, not from one. They have much less to do with the fact that Africans are black than with the fact that they are broadly agreed on certain political and social ends, which they believe can only be realized by the liberation of their countries from colonial rule. In its essentials, therefore, West African nationalism has certain points in common with the nationalisms which have arisen in the past among North Americans, Indians, Chinese, Indonesians, Arabs, and other colonial or semi-colonial peoples. None the less, since West African national movements have also their own special characteristics, it may be useful to consider the main elements of which they are composed.

One of these elements is the demand for constitutional change: for the transfer of political power from a British bureaucracy to an African government responsible to an African legislature. Originally this demand took the form simply of pressure for greater African participation in legislative, administrative and judicial bodies. Today the nationalist demand is for full self-government in external as well as internal affairs and for the ending of colonial rule, in however modified a form.

'What the people of this country want is real political power to manage their own affairs, without leaving power in the hands of a single person appointed by an alien power, however paternalistic or kind.'

Another element is the movement against European firms—in particular the largest of them, the United Africa Company—which are widely believed to use their near-monopolist position in regard to foreign trade in such a way as to weaken African enterprise, and to keep the prices of imports artificially high, to the disadvantage of the African consumer. (In a study of the part played by extra-territorial enterprises in the Nigerian economy, published in 1948, Dr. J. Mars lists eight main methods by which Nigeria may be said to be exploited by these enterprises.⁶) This economic theme, discussed in more detail in a later chapter, recurs repeatedly in the history of West African nationalism. It lay behind the great cocoa hold-up in 1937–38 and the boycott of European goods in the Gold Coast in January 1948. It is an issue in regard to which the ordinary farmer, fisherman, market woman or petty trader has strong feelings. For this reason it is like gas in a coal mine which, given a particular concatenation of circumstances, may always produce an explosion.

A third element is opposition to the Missions. West African nationalism is not as a rule anti-Christian: indeed many nationalists are practising Christians. But it is frequently anti-clerical: or rather it tends to be critical of what are regarded as *European* hierarchies—whether Roman Catholic, Anglican or Nonconformist. This criticism has two aspects. It is held that the Missions are one agency (alongside of the Government and the foreign firms) through which Europeans exercise power over Africans—in particular over the education of Africans. Many Africans also believe that the Christian faith, as preached by the various Churches, embodies European accretions; and that Africans need their own indigenous form of Christianity, which will reconcile what are regarded as the essentials of Christian ethics with traditional African practices, such as polygamy.

In its more radical forms West African nationalism is also a movement which challenges the power of the chiefs. Recent West African history contains many examples of conflicts between 'young men' or 'commoners' on the one hand and chiefs and their supporters on the other.

'Education has raised a class of educated commoner *vis-à-vis* the illiterate chief and council. In the few but increasing cases where

the chief is educated, the majority of his council are illiterate. These educated commoners are employed as clerks, teachers, cocoa-brokers, shopkeepers. They have a high prestige in the community due to their wealth, occupation, or literacy, and they seek to exercise an effective influence in the political and social life of the community corresponding to their enhanced status. But they find that the traditional political organization places authority in the hands of the chief and his illiterate council whom they consider unprogressive or reactionary.⁷

The movement of commoners to weaken the political power of the chief tends to act as a stimulus to nationalism because the chief—particularly if he is ‘unprogressive and reactionary’—is liable to find himself looking to the British administration to underpin his authority. In such cases nationalists—whatever may be their attitude to chiefship, as a traditional African institution—tend to regard the individual chief as simply part of the apparatus of colonial rule. This helps to account for the fact that the coming to power of the Convention People’s Party Government in the Gold Coast was followed by a widespread movement to ‘destool’ unpopular chiefs. The new political situation—loosening rigidities in the administrative system—gave the commoners an opportunity to reassert what they felt were their constitutional rights against those chiefs who, relying upon official support, had abused their power.

Historically, national movements in Greece, Italy, India, China and elsewhere have been associated with a renaissance—a renewal of interest in the nation’s traditions, culture, language, and the like. Such a renaissance is taking place in West Africa today. A generation ago such men as J. M. Sarbah and Casely Hayford in the Gold Coast, and Samuel Johnson in Nigeria, studied the institutions of the Akan and Yoruba peoples, and thereby helped to destroy the European myth that West Africa (apart from the northern Nigerian Emirates) was a country without a history.⁸ It was clearly of great value to young West African nationalists to be freed from the superstition which identified traditional African society with ‘barbarism’ and British rule with ‘civilization,’ and to realize that their peoples had possessed, and still possessed, their own distinctive forms of civilization. More recently the work of Dr. J. B. Danquah

on Akan institutions has had considerable influence.⁹ The now generally accepted use of the term 'Ghana' to mean the Gold Coast largely derives from his disputed theory that the Akan peoples of the Gold Coast originally came to their present homes from Ghana, the empire north of the Niger which flourished from about the fifth until the thirteenth century.¹⁰ The growth of interest in the literary and scientific potentialities of Fanti, Twi, Yoruba, Hausa and other West African languages, and the writing of novels, poems and plays in the vernacular, are also signs of this renaissance. So is the tendency of young West Africans to wear their own national dress in preference to European dress, and to take African rather than European first names.

Finally, West African nationalism is in part a protest against poverty. This element was lacking so long as the leaders of the national movement were the relatively wealthy middle class. But during the post-war period, with the rise of N.C.N.C. in Nigeria and, later, the C.P.P. in the Gold Coast, and with the growth of Trade Union influence within the national movement, the struggle for self-government has become more closely identified with the struggle for improved living standards. This is the more natural since Europeans appear to dominate the nation's economic life (through their control of banking, shipping, foreign trade, mining, etc.), and to enjoy a standard of life far higher than that enjoyed by all but a tiny minority of Africans. Thus all protests against African poverty tend at the same time to involve an attack on the Europeans' position of economic predominance and privilege. To the average underpaid clerk or teacher, the railway worker living in the slums of Lagos or Sekondi, the fisherman or market woman making the barest of livelihoods, the mother of ten children who has seen half of them die in infancy, nationalism makes sense when it is stated in economic terms. The success of the C.P.P. has been in large part due to the fact that, following in the tradition of European radicalism, it has declared its aim to be the creation of a democratic society—in the sense of a society in which power belongs to the mass of poor citizens and is used for their benefit.

Contemporary West African nationalism may thus be thought of as compounded of at least these six elements: the demand for constitutional reform, and the transfer of political power; opposition

to the economic power of the extra-territorial firms; opposition to the spiritual power of the Missions; the movement to strengthen the position of the commoners as against that of the chief; the reawakening of interest in national culture and history; the protest against poverty and the demand for improvements in the standard of life.

Parties, Groups, Trade Unions

Recent British writers on West African politics have tended to direct their main attention to the new constitutions which are now in operation in the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone—sometimes in order to congratulate the British Government and people on their perspicacity and liberalism, and sometimes in order to question the wisdom of this supposedly rapid tempo of constitutional change.

From the African side things look rather different: what is represented in London as the disinterested encouragement of rapid political progress can seem in Lagos or Accra to be simply a grudging and belated recognition of actual power relationships. Whichever view is accepted, it is important to remember that the new constitutions did not drop down from Heaven. They were the official answers to the nationalist demands, expressed in a variety of ways through a variety of channels, for 'self-government now.' All constitutions are interesting, not so much from the standpoint of the formal procedures which they lay down, as from that of the real relationships between organized groups and interests, of which they are the reflection, and for which they provide a framework.

One of the remarkable achievements of the West African peoples during the past thirty years has been the construction of a network of popular organizations, the need for which has arisen from the changing character of West African society, and from the new problems with which Africans have been faced. While the British authorities have interested themselves in the effort to preserve traditional African institutions—the so-called 'Native Authorities'—the African people themselves (without the help, and sometimes with the active opposition, of their rulers, both British and tribal) have been building up institutions of a new type—interesting both in themselves and as evidence of the capacity of Africans for democratic organization.

There are, first, the political parties and groupings. These follow either an older or a newer model. The older model is that of a loose association of nationalist bodies, held together by a common political platform and leadership. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons and the United Gold Coast Convention are examples. The weakness of bodies of this type is, of course, that though they may function effectively for a short period—e.g. during a particular national crisis—their lack of discipline and a machine to maintain themselves over a longer period. Their paper support tends to become stronger than their active support: responsibility is not clearly defined: and decisions are liable to be the affair of a junta. The new model is best illustrated by the Convention People's Party in the Gold Coast. This is a political party in the strict sense. It has an efficient party machine, with its basis in the local branches, and a clear chain of responsibility running from the individual branch member to the national executive. It has its rules, its system of dues and procedure for dues-collecting, its discipline, its full-time organizers, its techniques of securing and maintaining popular support and enthusiasm. The Action Group in western Nigeria has worked out somewhat similar methods and applied them for its own political purposes.

While efficient organization, and mastery of the techniques of party management, are not, of course, the only criteria, they are coming to be as important in West Africa as in Britain. It is extremely difficult for a loose federal body, depending upon the spasmodic initiative of a few political leaders, and their personal influence and following, to hold its own against a well-organized modern party machine. For this reason, it seems clear that the future lies with the new model organizations rather than the old.

It is also useful to draw a broad distinction between political organizations from the standpoint of theory and policy: between the more radical bodies, which are critical of chiefly power, which emphasize the need for the improvement of the economic conditions of the peasantry and working-class, and which advocate methods of mass pressure to secure political change; and the more conservative bodies, which (in general) support the chiefs, stress the importance of the rights of property, and hold that political change must only be brought about by 'constitutional' means. This kind of

opposition has existed in the Gold Coast between the radical C.P.P. and the conservative U.G.C.C. It exists today in northern Nigeria between the Northern Elements' Progressive Union (which advocates the substitution of democratic forms of government for the autocratic rule of the Amirs) and the Northern People's Congress (which stands for the preservation of the traditional authority of the Amirs, whom it hopes to convert into agents of enlightenment and progress). It is, of course, not uncommon, as in Europe, for organizations to move over from radicalism to conservatism: for example, the N.C.N.C. in Nigeria, which during the period 1944 to 1948 carried on a vigorous and effective struggle against colonial rule, later became moderate and respectable.

There are many other organizations, not strictly political in their aims, which act as 'carriers' of nationalist ideas, and which play an important part in the building up of West African public opinion. To this class belong the various Tribal Unions, Progressive Unions, Improvement Leagues, etc., described by Lord Hailey as 'semi-political associations.'¹¹ These bodies are particularly influential in southern Nigeria. They are 'tribal' in the sense that they draw their membership from a particular tribe or section of a tribe, and are also essentially 'modern' as regards their leadership and functions. The leaders of the Ibo and Ibibio Unions, for example, or of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (the Yoruba tribal society) are drawn in the main from the educated middle class. The Unions function in part as friendly societies, looking after the interests of their members wherever they may happen to be (particularly if they are living in areas remote from their homes), helping them during periods of economic need, and organizing celebrations on special occasions. At the same time they concern themselves with the promotion of education—either by awarding scholarships to their members' children, or by actually establishing and running their own schools (e.g. the Ibibio State College). Finally, the Unions often play an important part in local government, and provide an instrument through which pressure for reform can be brought to bear upon the Native Authorities.

'A great idea was born during this last stage [i.e. during the 1930's]—the idea of Unions; Tribal Unions, District Unions, Sectional Unions, Town Unions, Village Unions and Family

Meetings sprang up. . . . In many respects they are the only sources of light and progress in the country places where the Native Court system has disorganized everything, and left nothing but confusion and litigation and long court-suits.¹²

Women's Unions similarly tend to combine welfare with politics. One of the most vigorous of these is the Egba Women's Union in Abeokuta, which has both done remarkable work in stimulating home weaving and played a large part in organizing popular opposition to the Alake—culminating in 1948 in his expulsion. Youth organizations too provide a forum in which political issues can be discussed and action initiated. The Ashanti Youth Association, for example, has been an important rallying-point for radical young Ashantis, and helped to prepare the ground for the ideas and policies of the C.P.P.

Dissident churches provide another channel for the expression of nationalist beliefs, rather in the way in which the sects in seventeenth-century England, or Primitive Methodist congregations in the early nineteenth century, expressed radical political theories in the language of religious nonconformity. The Nigerian National Church is one example of such a body, which begins from the assumption that Christianity needs to be stripped of its Western European ecclesiastical forms and doctrines before it can be made acceptable to Africans. Belief in 'the God of Africa' is a natural response to a situation in which the God of the existing Christian Churches has seemed too good a European.

One consequence of the changes occurring in economic relationships, and the appearance of new social classes, is the growing importance of organizations which express in the first place an economic interest—for example Traders' Associations, Farmers' Unions, and Trade Unions. Of these the first reflects the standpoint of merchants, middlemen, cocoa-brokers, etc., the second that of the more prosperous farmers (mainly those concerned with the production of export crops); and the third that of wage and small salary earners. While these bodies function in part as economic pressure groups, interested in the price of cocoa or the level of wages and salaries, they are also concerned with wider political issues, the policy of 'cutting-out' of diseased cocoa plants, the use

of the reserves of the Marketing Boards, the development of public education, the establishment of local industries, etc.

The Trade Unions in particular have contributed to the growth of West African nationalism during the post-war period. The Nigerian general strike of 1945, while the immediate issue with which it was concerned was the cost of living allowance for Government employees, in fact involved a frontal attack by the Unions upon the Government's entire economic policy. It produced a temporary alliance between the Trade Unions and the N.C.N.C. which greatly strengthened the latter's influence and extended the range of its support. A similar alliance existed between the Gold Coast T.U.C. and the C.P.P. in connection with the general strike of January 1950. The strike was called in part in protest against the suspension of a number of meteorological workers and in part in support of the C.P.P.'s demand for immediate self-government.

The relation between Trade Unions and nationalist politics is a subject of controversy in West Africa today. After 1951 the Unions came under heavy pressure, from the administration and from the American-inspired International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 'not to mix Trade Unionism with politics.' They have also suffered from the victimization of their members after unsuccessful strikes (the 1950 general strike in the Gold Coast, the 1951 mercantile workers' strike in Nigeria): and they are having to face the difficult problems involved in the effort to build up an efficient, financially stable organization.

For all these reasons there is now a tendency for the Unions to become less closely associated with particular political parties. But to suppose that they can, or should, disinterest themselves in political issues is an illusion. In a society in which living conditions in the towns compare unfavourably with those described in Engel's *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* the Trade Union movement is bound, as in Chartist Britain, to be strongly influenced by radical political ideas, and to show few of the qualities of respectability of the present-day British T.U.C. Miners working for £4 per month, or workers on the banana plantations earning 1/6 per day, are not likely to be much influenced by the argument that the Union's first concern should be to co-operate with the management in an effort to improve productivity. While their first concern is

naturally the level of wages and salaries, West African Unions are bound to agitate also over questions of rents and prices, the limitation of hours, the improvement of working conditions, housing and health, etc. Moreover, the fact that the struggle for economic improvement is carried on by Unions composed of Africans against enterprises (whether public or private) whose higher management consists for the most part of Europeans, means that the Unions, through the exercise of their normal functions, take on a nationalist character.

Those who are sceptical about the prospects of West African democracy can take comfort from this exuberant growth of popular organizations, one effect of which is to train large numbers of Africans, particularly the younger men, in the framing of constitutions, the keeping of minutes, the handling of correspondence, the recruiting of members, the collecting of subscriptions, and the other techniques necessary for the running of a democratic society. Of course (as in England) there is a good deal of inefficiency, and a certain amount of financial irregularity. And (as in England) there is a tendency for the same energetic group of people to be concerned in the local management of a number of voluntary organizations. For example, one house in Enugu has (or had) a notice on the front door explaining that it was the headquarters of the Enugu branch of the N.C.N.C., of the Freedom Movement, of the African National Church and the Tenants' Union as well as the office of the Nigerian Miners' Union. Close links often exist between organizations of different types—e.g. between the Action Group, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, and various local tribal organizations in the Western Provinces of Nigeria: or between N.C.N.C., the Ibo Union, and other local tribal Unions in the Eastern Provinces. But it would be a profound mistake to imagine that these organizations reflect only the views of a small educated minority. Their leadership tends naturally to be drawn from this minority; but they enjoy influence and support among a wide cross-section of the community—illiterate workers, farmers, fishermen, market women, etc., as well as clerks and teachers. They are evidence that the West African national movements, like the British Labour movement, have become an effective political force.

Constitutional Change

In the Gold Coast since 1950, and in Nigeria since 1951, new constitutions have been in operation which permit a greater measure of African self-government than has hitherto been enjoyed in any part of colonial Africa. Until the end of the second World War the constitutions of all the British West African territories were of the 'Crown Colony' type: effective power belonged to the Governor and his predominantly British administration, while a Legislative Council existed, including some unofficial African members (both nominated and elected), but serving in practice as, at best, a forum for the ventilation of grievances. The 1946 ('Burns') constitution in the Gold Coast did not seriously diverge from this traditional pattern.

'The concession of an African majority in the Legislature, in the absence of any real political power, provided no outlet for a people eagerly emerging into political consciousness. On the other hand it provided a powerful stimulant for political discontent. The real and effective political government remained in the hands of the Executive Council. Composed of *ex officio* and nominated members it was the instrument of power. The Legislature was a Chamber of Debate.'¹³

Similarly the 1947 ('Richards') constitution—while it established for the first time one central legislative body for the whole of Nigeria, with regional legislatures in the west, east and north—also made no fundamental changes in the location of political power.

'The Legislative Council is no nearer than its predecessor to being an elective assembly, for the number of elected members was not increased in 1946. The Executive Council was not altered either in its composition or in its relationship to the Governor, for there are still only three unofficial members, none of whom is at present a member of the Legislative Council. Nigeria is thus no nearer to responsible government than it was.'¹⁴

But it quickly became clear that the time had passed when the problems of Gold Coast and Nigeria could be handled within the

traditional constitutional framework, even if refurbished to make it appear more presentable. The popular agitation of the period 1945 to 1950, while it had many roots—the impact of the War and the revolutionary movements in Asia, the grievances of returning ex-servicemen, the inflationary pressure of the immediate post-war period and the consequent growth of opposition to the foreign firms—tended naturally to focus itself on the issue of self-government. In the Gold Coast the Watson Commission, reporting on the causes of the 1948 disturbances, in which an ex-servicemen's procession was shot down by the police, recommended a substantial measure of constitutional reform. The dominant ideas of the Watson Report were worked out in detail by the all-African Coussey Committee (consisting in the main of moderates, elder statesmen and chiefs) in 1949: and the present constitution is the child of the Coussey Committee's deliberations.

In Nigeria popular discontent expressed itself through the agitation against the colour bar in 1947, the sending of the N.C.N.C. delegation to England in the same year, the 1948 Kaduna Conference of the N.C.N.C. which approved the 'Freedom Charter,' and the activities of the Zikist movement (suppressed in 1949). The 1951 Constitution was the outcome of a complicated series of conferences—at district, regional and national levels—in which again the dominant part was played by elder statesmen and chiefs (many of them members of the old Legislative Council) reinforced by a few nationalists.

Thus the new constitutions in both the Gold Coast and Nigeria can be regarded as a compromise between the nationalist demands for political independence, or 'Dominion status,' and the views of the Colonial Office, the British administration and the more conservative sections of West African opinion, anxious to retain as much as possible of the realities of British power. Prime Minister Nkrumah remarked in this context, that under the new constitution the people of the Gold Coast were 'half slave and half free.'

Both constitutions provide for Legislatures, elected on a wide franchise, consisting almost entirely of African members. Both ensure special representation for the interests of chiefs. In both, elections are mainly indirect, through electoral colleges—except in certain towns (Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi in the Gold

Coast and Lagos and Calabar in Nigeria). In both, executive power is in the hands of Executive Councils, responsible to the Legislative Assemblies, consisting mainly of African Ministers, but including also a minority of *ex-officio* (i.e. British) Ministers, controlling some of the key departments of State (notably Finance, Justice, Security and External Relations). In both the Governor, and in Nigeria the Lieutenant-Governors, possess certain reserve powers, which enable them (in theory at any rate) to override both Legislative Assembly and Council of Ministers.

The following are some of the more important points of contrast.

First, Nigeria has a federal, the Gold Coast a unitary constitution. Nigeria, as the *Explanatory Note to the Nigeria (Constitution) Order in Council, 1951*, points out, has—like Caesar's Gaul—been divided into three parts. Its constitution gives wide powers to the three regional Governments which have effective control over such matters as agriculture, local industries, Co-operative Societies, social welfare, education, land, local government and public health. Moreover, the African Ministers in the central Government are responsible *not* to the central Legislature, but to the regional Legislatures, by whom they are elected. The effect of this arrangement must be to make it difficult, if not impossible, for genuinely responsible government to emerge at the centre. At the same time, the decision to make the region the effective unit of government is liable to strengthen and encourage those political parties which appeal to regional or tribal sentiments and loyalties. Whereas the Gold Coast constitution contributes to the growth of a Gold Coast national consciousness, the Nigerian constitution seems likely to operate against the emergence of a Nigerian nation.

Second, while the qualification for the franchise in both territories is based upon payment of tax, this means in practice *universal suffrage* in the Gold Coast (where women pay taxes) and *adult male suffrage* in Nigeria (where in general women do not pay taxes): and in northern Nigeria women are specifically excluded from the franchise.

Third, the system of indirect election is more complex in Nigeria than in the Gold Coast, and seems to offer more opportunities for corruption and 'horse-trading' at the various stages. This is particularly apparent in northern Nigeria, where there are no less than

five stages between the electorate and the House of Assembly (at each of which the influence of traditional authority can be brought to bear), and where nominated representatives of the Native Authorities (i.e. the Amirs and their retainers) are introduced at the final stage.

Fourth, the Gold Coast has a single-chamber legislature in which the chiefs are represented: in the northern and western regions of Nigeria (but not in the eastern) there are separate Houses of Chiefs, with what are described as 'equal and concurrent powers.'

Fifth, the powers of African ministers are more clearly defined in the Gold Coast, where they are in charge of their various departments and responsible for deciding questions of policy—the function of the permanent official being (as in Britain) to advise and to execute. In Nigeria the constitutional powers of the ministers are more restricted: it is their function to 'co-operate' with the permanent heads of their respective departments, who can only be overruled by the Governor-in-Council (or, in the regions, by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council), not by individual ministers. This is connected with the fact that the 'Secretariat'—a typically colonial institution—has been broken up in the Gold Coast, but has so far survived in Nigeria: so that if, for example, the Nigerian Minister for Commerce and Industries wishes to give instructions to his chief permanent official, he has to persuade the Governor to instruct the Secretariat to instruct the official—a somewhat complicated procedure.

Moreover, the notion in the Gold Coast that the Executive Council should function as a Cabinet, with a 'Leader of Government Business' who enjoyed the standing and powers of a Prime Minister was accepted in practice as soon as the 1951 election results were known, and in March 1952 was actually written into a revised constitution. No such principle emerged clearly in Nigeria, where the intention was apparently that leadership within the Councils of Ministers should continue to rest with the Governor (or Lieutenant-Governor) rather than with an African minister: though in the western region, at least, the position of the Action Group and of Mr. Awolowo seems sufficiently strong for them to have secured the initiative, and established in practice a form of party government.

On all these grounds it seems fair to argue that the Nigerian constitution is weighted more heavily in favour of the imperial power, and against the national movement, than that of the Gold Coast. Indeed, there are Europeans who have privately expressed the view that the Nigerian constitution is relatively harmless, since it leaves the essentials of political power firmly in the hands of the British administration and its allies. During 1953 there were strong moves by Nigerian nationalists for further advance towards self-government; and this pressure will certainly continue.

What are the implications of these constitutions for the national movements of West Africa?

In the first place, they confront the nationalist parties and organizations with the question whether to co-operate in the working of the new political machinery. So far no major political organization has chosen a policy of non-co-operation. The C.P.P. in the Gold Coast, while it strenuously attacked the Coussey Committee and the constitution which emerged from that Committee, fought the 1951 elections; and, having won its sweeping majority, decided after brief hesitation to form a government. In Nigeria, where there was also a strong current of nationalist opinion hostile to the constitution, all the major political bodies took part in the elections; and the African Ministries in each of the three regions were taken by the organizations that won at the polls: the Northern People's Congress in the north, the Action Group in the west and the N.C.N.C. (with its allies from the British Cameroons) in the east. From the standpoint of the nationalist parties one strong argument in favour of participation in the working of constitutions which fall a long way short of their demands is the value of gaining experience in governing, and dealing with the problems involved in translating political ideas into practice.

Second, the constitutions act as a stimulus to the development of political parties. The founders of the C.P.P. showed remarkable foresight in 1949, while the Coussey Committee was still sitting, to concentrate upon the building of a party machine which would be able, eight months later, to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the new constitution. The Action Group (which was thrown up by Egbe Omo Oduduwa in western Nigeria in 1951) was an example of the same kind of intelligent anticipation of events.

Yet neither the Gold Coast nor the Nigerian Constitutions assumed the existence of political parties. There is no reference to 'party' in the Coussey Report, and the Secretary of State's despatch of October 1949 specifically states—'there is not as yet a party system in the Gold Coast, and without it, while the member of the Assembly chosen as Leader would admittedly command the majority of votes on the occasion when he was so chosen, there would be no guarantee that he would continue to command a majority.'

Both Dr. Nkrumah and Mr. Awolowo saw what the constitution makers and the older generation of politicians had apparently failed to see—that representative government and a wide franchise make essential the emergence of parties through which the politician can appeal to the electorate. The new 'dynamic' methods used by the C.P.P.—the carrying of propaganda away from the main towns and roads into the villages, the use of party rallies, dances, flags, songs, and 'Prison Graduate' caps, the basing of the organization on the individual Party member with his Party card—these were means to the end of 'building up a strong Party machine capable of trouncing opponents.'

'Organize! Organize! For organization decides everything' became a favourite C.P.P. slogan. The new constitutions encourage the tendency for the present generation of African nationalists to place their main emphasis upon organization, rather than mere agitation, as the way to independence.

It cannot, of course, be argued that a party system of the kind that exists in Britain exists in British West Africa. Nor is it particularly desirable that it should. In the Gold Coast the opposition to the C.P.P. is still relatively weakly organized, and the new 'Ghana Congress Party' has not yet shown itself to be much more than a caucus of dissatisfied politicians and pressure groups. In Nigeria a different party (or political grouping) is at the moment dominant in each of the three regions. In some cases bodies which call themselves parties are in practice little more than pressure groups with a head office. What has been demonstrated—particularly in the Gold Coast—is the capacity of West Africans to construct a mass political party which is capable of exercising an effective degree of discipline among its members, both in the Assembly and in the country, permitting controversy over a wide range of questions of policy

and tactics. At the present stage of history, while the struggle for self-government is still the overriding issue, opposition within a mass party is likely to have at least as important an influence on the course of events as opposition between parties.

The new forms of central, and (in Nigeria) of regional, government make more pressing the reform of local government. The Coussey Report linked the two issues in a single plan. In Nigeria, though constitutional reform was dealt with as a separate issue, a scheme for the establishment of local authorities of a new type (based upon popular election, and modelled, in part, upon English County Councils) was launched in the east in 1951. Mr. Awolowo, as Minister for Local Government in the Western Region, has also carried through legislation setting up elected divisional councils, in place of the traditional Native Authorities.

Until recently West African nationalists were understandably sceptical of proposals for local government reform, on the ground that no real democratization of Local Authorities could take place while power at the centre was in the hands of a British bureaucracy. Now, however, with the realization nationally of at least a measure of responsible government, there is no case for retaining the traditional forms of local administration. It is clearly absurd to try to combine parliamentary government at the centre with semi-autocratic chiefs, backed by District Commissioners, in the localities.

While no immediate steps are being taken to abolish chiefly power, the new system of local government introduced in the Gold Coast—which allows for two-thirds of the members of Local Authorities to be democratically elected, while one-third are nominated by the old Native Authorities—and in southern Nigeria, in practice imply the 'twilight of indirect rule.' They also imply the withering away of the District Commissioner: or at least his transformation from a representative of the imperial Power into the local agent or inspector of an African Government, or the clerk to an African divisional council. How far British officials are capable of adapting themselves to this new situation is one of the interesting questions at the present time.

While the principle of local government reform has been accepted in the Gold Coast and in southern Nigeria, and is already beginning

to be applied in practice (the recruitment of British administrative officers having been stopped in both territories), the situation in northern Nigeria raises more difficult problems. The North is the traditional stronghold of 'indirect rule,' where, for the past fifty years, political power has been shared by autocratic Amirs and a paternalist administrative machine. This fact, combined with the fact that most members of the Northern House of Assembly are relations, dependants, or employees of the Amirs naturally makes them approach the subject of local government reform with some diffidence. Yet for this very reason the traditional institutions of the North are becoming increasingly vulnerable. The idea of building a democratic Nigeria around a feudal autocratic North is about as reasonable as the idea of building a democratic Germany around a feudal autocratic Prussia. It seems that this point is becoming clear even to members of the relatively conservative Northern People's Congress, and that, if an explosion is to be avoided, a radical reorganization of local government in the North will have to be undertaken quickly.

Another important effect of the new constitutions is the entry of new men into politics. The African membership of the unreformed Legislative Councils consisted, for the most part, of lawyers, the bigger chiefs, wealthy traders, with an occasional repentant journalist: most of them middle-aged or elderly people, described in official reports as 'men of good will' and in the nationalist Press as 'Uncle Toms': excellent people in many respects, but largely out of touch with contemporary trends in African opinion. The new constitutions have made it necessary to find a much larger number of people to take part in public affairs. There are 75 African members of the Gold Coast House of Assembly; 136 of the Nigerian: in addition there are in Nigeria three regional Houses of Assembly, with a numerous total membership that has to be manned. In northern Nigeria, where the effect of the electoral system has been to exclude the 'new men,' this has simply meant an increased demand for politicians of the traditional type. But in southern Nigeria and the Gold Coast, where parties enjoying a reasonably broad basis of popular support were successful at the polls, there has been an important change in the character and composition of the legislature: a higher proportion of schoolteachers, small traders,

trade unionists, pharmacists, farmers and professional politicians; of people whose formal education stopped short at the primary stage; and of the young.

‘The average age of the total Assembly (sc. in the Gold Coast) was under 40, and the average age of the 33 rural representatives was under 38. More significant still, the average age of the government ministers and ministerial secretaries was lower than the average age of the Assembly. In other words the new *élite* was one of the youngest *élites* in the representative assembly of any country in the world. And this situation arose in a country where traditionally the voice of the “Elders” had been deemed to be authoritative, and the voice of youth was the voice of revolt.’¹⁵

Those Europeans (and some Africans) who expressed alarm at the entry of new men into politics—on the ground that they would lack the political capacity of the elder statesmen—have been shown to have misjudged the situation. The new men, because they are more representative of the opinions of ordinary people in West Africa, have a greater sense of responsibility to their constituents and parties. They have a clearer understanding of the problems of their time—are able to play a much more effective part in public affairs than the elder statesmen. The debates in the Legislative Assemblies now have a vitality and a realism which were lacking under the old regime.

Obviously it would be wrong to claim that these constitutions involve a revolutionary break with the past, or a total surrender of British power. But, associated as they have been with the appearance of new forms of popular organization and new trends in political thought, they certainly mark the beginning of a new phase in West African history. Moreover, they make it easier to form some idea of the release of human energies, and the development of political capacities, which will be possible in the democratic West African societies of the future.

The Way of Advance

What are the main problems which face the national movements in British West Africa at the present time, and how best can these

problems be solved? The central question is, of course, the question of *power*: should responsibility for decisions which affect the lives and happiness of West Africans rest with Africans or Europeans? Should effective control over the State remain in the hands of a body of paternalistic foreign administrators or of an African government responsible to an African electorate?

In principle, these questions are already answered. Though there will be some both in West Africa and in Britain who will fight a rearguard action to delay or obstruct the transfer of power, there can be no serious disagreement on the point that colonial rule in West Africa has no future. This ought to be as clear to a Conservative Secretary of State for the Colonies as it is to an Ashanti cocoa-farmer or a lorry-driver from Enugu. This is not, of course, to say that colonial rule is in fact already ended; or that it can be abolished without effort and struggle: rather that the conditions for its continuance no longer exist in West Africa.

But if the problem of the transfer of power is already settled in principle, this at once raises a number of other questions. How rapidly should the transfer take place? Does 'self-government' mean simply a change in institutional forms—in the sense that some form of responsible parliamentary government takes the place of the traditional colonial political arrangements? Or is a change necessary also in the character of the economic and social policies which West African governments pursue—indeed in the whole organization of West African society? What problems are involved in the relationships between government and administration? Is the notion of African self-government compatible with a situation in which the main controls in administration, external trade, banking and investment, mining, etc., are operated by Europeans? How should the problems arising from the existing arbitrary colonial frontiers be handled? If one grants that self-government can have meaning for the Gold Coast or for Nigeria, can this idea be usefully applied in the case of territories as small as Sierra Leone or (even more) the Gambia? What are the causes of internal tension and conflict between particular national and regional groups—e.g., between North and South, and between East and West, in Nigeria—and how can these be removed? What is, and what should be, the position of chiefs in the new West African States? Finally, what kind of

self-governing States are coming into being? Is there any ground for thinking that the course of events which has occurred elsewhere—whereby rule by a foreign bureaucracy gives place to rule by a nationalist junta—will not repeat itself in West Africa?

These are large questions. They can be answered in a partial and tentative way.

In general the more radical parties and groups in West Africa have demanded 'self-government now': the more conservative have asked for 'self-government in the shortest possible time.'

Behind this difference over the question of timing is an important difference in political outlook. Radical bodies (like the C.P.P. in the Gold Coast or the Freedom Movement in Nigeria) tend to reflect the standpoint of those people in the community who are most dissatisfied with existing economic conditions and see in self-government the only hope of changing them. Imperialism, as they see it, is the main cause of poverty. Therefore they desire the immediate elimination of imperial rule. The more conservative bodies, on the other hand (e.g. the U.G.C.C. and National Democratic Party in the Gold Coast or the Action Group in Nigeria), influenced by the ideas of the propertied classes, are anxious to ensure that no sudden or drastic changes are made in the established social and political system, and wish the transition to self-government to be orderly and gradual. The effort to speed up the process of transition means methods of popular pressure—bringing the proletarian and semi-proletarian population of the towns into the streets—which, they fear, might produce a revolutionary situation. Therefore, while their interest in self-government is genuine enough, their own situation is not so desperate that they need seek an immediate way out.

The same kind of difference of outlook lies behind the opposition between the Northern People's Congress and N.E.P.U. in northern Nigeria. The Congress, representing that section of opinion which enjoys some influence and authority under the present regime, is anxious to prevent the development of a popular movement which might threaten that regime: it therefore wishes the advance to self-government to be conducted at a leisurely pace. N.E.P.U., on the other hand, representing the views of propertyless teachers, clerks, petty traders, lorry drivers, market women, etc., wishes to see an

immediate and thorough reform of the present autocratic system, and therefore (having regard to the close links between Fulani autocracy and British officialdom) presses for a rapid transfer of power, a responsible legislature, democratic elections, freedom of speech and assembly, etc.

Thus the great debate between the supporters of tradition and gradualism and the supporters of innovation and radical reform is restated in a West African setting. The average supporter of N.E.P.U. would agree that: 'Whatever our forefathers were, or whatever they did or suffered, or were enforced to yield unto, we are men of the present age and ought to be absolutely free from all kinds of exorbitancies, molestations and arbitrary powers.'¹⁶

When, however, as in the Gold Coast, a radical party actually comes to power it may find itself obliged, as the C.P.P. has been, to accept for the time being a constitution which falls short of full self-government. In this situation a conservative opposition may find it tactically useful (as the U.G.C.C. has done) to reverse the roles and demand immediate self-government. But the demand is then a flamboyant gesture rather than a statement of policy. The broad distinction between the radical and the gradualist approach to the question—how soon should power be transferred?—remains valid.

The answer to the question of timing is one that can only be worked out in practice. The history of other colonial peoples—American, Irish, Indian, Ceylonese, Indonesian, Egyptian—suggests that the question—is such-and-such a people ready, or ripe, for self-government?—is an unreal question. There is no criterion of the 'readiness' or 'ripeness' of a people other than the determination of a substantial body of its members to establish and maintain their own form of government. That stage has already been reached in the Gold Coast and in southern Nigeria. It is likely soon to be reached in northern Nigeria and in Sierra Leone. The various checks and restraints—*ex-officio* Ministers, reserve powers of the Governor, special representation for commercial interests, and the like—which stand between the West African peoples and full self-government then become little more than a game which constitutional lawyers are accustomed to play. There are no valid political arguments against the abolition of these restraints and the granting

of full self-government at whatever date the representatives of the West African peoples demand it.

The economic problems of British West Africa are discussed in the next chapter. Here I want only to comment briefly on the attitude of West African parties, and of nationalists generally, to this aspect of their problems.

Until about ten years ago it would have been fair to say that nationalists were preoccupied with purely political and constitutional questions. The establishment of responsible government and the Africanization of the administration, judiciary, etc., were regarded as adequate aims, and little attention was given to the question of the kind of economic and social changes which self-government would involve.

But this is no longer the position. From about 1940, with the broadening of the social basis of the national movements, much thought has been given to these questions, both by the political parties and their leaders and by non-party groups. During the period from 1943 to 1948, the N.C.N.C. and Dr. Azikiwe began to work out their ideas about the kind of economic order which they wished to establish in a self-governing Nigeria. This process has since 1949 been carried a stage further by the C.P.P. and Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast, and by the Action Group and Mr. Awolowo in western Nigeria.

Their ideas have been embodied in a number of articles, pamphlets, programmes and manifestos (and to some extent in actual policy) so that it is now possible to give some indication of the economic and social theories of West African nationalism.

In the first place, West African nationalists believe firmly in the need for rapid industrial development. They remain unconvinced by the arguments of British liberal economists, who praise the virtues of international specialization (with West Africa specializing, for the foreseeable future, in the production of raw materials and foodstuffs). They wish to press forward with industrial development—not only as a means to improving living standards (essential though they regard this as being), but also for intelligible political reasons: as a solvent of traditional tribal relationships and antagonisms, and as a way of achieving a more balanced, and therefore less dependent, type of national economy; and, some would add,

as a necessary precondition of the growth of a vigorous working-class and trade union movement. They are much concerned too with the question of possible sources of capital, and of the methods by which foreign capital can be secured without this involving a new colonial status.

A second principle on which nationalists are generally agreed is the necessity for speeding up the tempo of social change. One of their main criticisms of British rule is that, even when it is well intentioned, it is seldom in a hurry. They point out that, after over a hundred years of British administration in the Colony, and over fifty years in Ashanti and the Northern Territories, only 5 per cent of the total population of the Gold Coast (according to the 1951 census) had passed through Standard III (an early primary stage in Britain). This rate of progress, they argue, is entirely out of relation with the needs of a society in which the aeroplane and the motor car, the wireless and the cinema, the ballot-box and the newspaper, are established institutions. The Africanization of the civil service, the reform of local government, the improvement of agricultural techniques, the development of industry and transport, the expansion of education itself, are tasks which can only be carried through if the educational system is capable of producing the civil servants, local government officers, accountants, agriculturalists, technicians, scientists, teachers, etc., that are required; and if the population as a whole is able to understand the processes of economic and social change that are taking place and to take part in them.

Thus nationalist theory (like the theory of British nineteenth-century radicalism) has placed special emphasis on the development of popular education. The fruits of this theory are already beginning to show themselves in the C.P.P.'s efforts to establish as rapidly as possible a system of 'free, universal and compulsory education' in the Gold Coast; in the Action Group's declared intention to introduce such a system in western Nigeria by 1955; and in the expansion of existing scholarship schemes for higher, and particularly technical, education in both countries. Inevitably a drive for the expansion of education on these lines is confronted not only with the problems of shortages (both of teachers and of building materials) but also with the opposition of those who resist rapid advance in the name of 'standards.'

But it is not only through the development of education that West African nationalists wish to reshape their society. They are concerned also with such problems as the improvement of the status of women; the reduction of the fantastically high infant mortality rates;¹⁷ the rehousing of the town populations, living for the most part under deplorable slum conditions; stopping the great waste of resources brought about by the existence of large-scale unemployment and under-employment; improving nutritional standards by greatly increasing the domestic production of food-stuffs, etc. While it is true that the British administration has been aware of these problems and made an effort to deal with them, the possibilities of social advance, in the nationalist view, are much greater under a popular than an alien government. The C.P.P. in particular has continually emphasized this idea of the effectiveness of a government as depending principally upon the extent to which it embodies the popular will:

‘If we are with the people the people will always be with us. Contact can be maintained by meetings, as well as by putting forward in the Assembly the needs and wishes of the people and getting them attended to. In this sense we must maintain connection with the masses of the people who gave birth to our Party, suckled it and reared it.’¹⁸

This conception of democracy—as depending upon the active participation of the mass of ordinary citizens in the processes of government—belongs clearly to the radical tradition of Rousseau and Tom Paine. It is none the worse for that. Thoughtful West African nationalists realize that they are no more free from bureaucratic tendencies than white men; but they do believe in the possibility of constructing a society in which there can be a new democratic relationship between government and people. And they do not regard self-government as meaning simply the substitution of black faces for white in the Houses of Assembly at Accra and Lagos.

Government Administration

The central problem of the relationship between a popularly elected African government and an administrative machine built

up, and still largely controlled, by the British is very like the problem discussed by Harold Laski in many of his writings. Laski speaks¹⁹ of the danger 'implicit in the narrow class from which the highest civil servants are drawn . . . the danger that they are not able imaginatively to penetrate the experience they have to encounter. The ways of life they know, the habits of thought in which they have been brought up, the departmental traditions in which they are immersed, all represent a mental climate so different from that the results of which they have to handle that it is far less certain to-day [1938] than it was a generation ago that they can handle it successfully.'

The relevance of this observation to West Africa (where there is a two-fold barrier—of nationality as well as of social class) is apparent. It is difficult for officials brought up in the tradition of British colonial administration to adapt themselves to the requirements of a self-governing African State. Not only do they tend to apply standards of 'sound administration' which are not necessarily appropriate in a society in which there is a strong demand for rapid economic and social change. In addition they—or at any rate the older officials—have been accustomed to work for a government in which all power belonged to the administrators: whereas in the new political systems that are emerging administrative must be subordinate to political power. Only those with an extremely flexible outlook can quickly adjust themselves to a new situation of this kind. At the same time there are problems arising from the relative isolation of many European officials from the life of the community in which they work. This can mean, in the worst case, that a man's thinking on contemporary issues may be formed by the small talk of the European club.

The fear of administrative paternalism—of original aims becoming confused, and national leaders becoming intellectually and morally corrupted, by the influence of British officialdom—lay behind Nkrumah's 'non-fraternization' order in February 1951:

'There must be no fraternisation between our Party members in the Executive Council and the European officials, except on purely official relations; for what imperialists failed to achieve by strong-arm methods they will hope to bring off by cocktail parties.'²⁰

This fear was strengthened by articles appearing in the British Press (and by one article in *The Financial Times* in particular), expressing the view that the complete disintegration of the Gold Coast could only be avoided if the C.P.P. ministers sat quiet, enjoyed their ministerial salaries, and did what their British advisers told them.

A year later Dr. Nkrumah restated his own and his Party's attitude to the question of the relations between government and administration:

'We are making sure that there are no more Civil "Masters" in this country as under the old colonial regime, but Civil Servants, as in other countries, dictating no policy, but faithfully carrying out the policy decided by the Cabinet. Any advice tendered by those in the Civil Service has been duly considered: the good has been taken and the bad rejected.'²¹

Dr. Nkrumah went on to say that the majority of British officials had adjusted themselves well to the new constitution; that the aim must be to establish a completely African civil service; but that, until that aim could be achieved, it was essential, to avoid breakdown, to continue to make use of 'those of our expatriates who have goodwill and respect for our people, who sympathize with our aspirations, and are willing to work with and for us in this spirit.'

This is a realistic statement. But it clearly does not dispose of the problem. A radical nationalist government must be concerned with the transformation of West African society. This can only be done if the people themselves participate in the process of transformation. So long as nationalists are having to work through the traditional state machine, so long they have also to accept the fact that the chain of relations between them and the people runs through an alien administration. Moreover, in economic affairs much of the real power still lies with the European trading firms, mining companies, banks, etc. They are in a position to exercise considerable influence on the internal price structure, on investment policy, on the opportunities open to African enterprise, on the extent to which and manner in which industrial development takes place, on the direction and character of external trade, etc.

There is no simple answer to this problem. Obviously one line of approach is to speed up the Africanization of the civil service, and (as a means to this end) to press forward with the expansion of higher education. But this in itself is not sufficient, since what is needed is not simply an African Civil Service, but an African Civil Service which will be honest and capable of carrying out the policies decided upon by African governments. The British have not succeeded in laying the foundations of such an administration. As Nkrumah pointed out:

‘Bribery and corruption, both moral and factual, have eaten into the whole fabric of our society, and these must be stamped out if we are to achieve any progress.’

Thus a further task of West African governments is the building up of an entirely new administrative tradition in which there is no place for corruption. This (as the present experience of China shows) is a perfectly practicable aim. At the same time—even when British political and administrative officers have been withdrawn—there will still for some time to come be a need for foreign technical experts—plant and animal breeders, soil chemists, engineers, nutritional experts, medical specialists, economic advisers, etc. No nationalist questions the necessity for importing such technicians from overseas—since no plans for economic and social reconstruction can succeed without them. But it is reasonable that West African governments should wish to draw on all the more advanced countries, and not simply on Britain, for these technicians; and that they should look particularly for technicians who are in sympathy with their social policies and interested in training Africans to master their techniques.

Finally, West African governments have already shown that they are aware of the need to exercise effective political control over such public bodies as Marketing Boards, Development Boards, etc. While they have not as yet undertaken the much larger task of controlling the extra-territorial firms, such as the United Africa Company or the mining companies, nationalists of the younger generation recognize that without such control the degree of self-government which the West African peoples can in fact enjoy will be seriously limited.

A further problem arises from the present situation in regard to State boundaries. These are the consequence of past colonial policies, adjustments between competing colonial Powers, and treaties in regard to which the African peoples were not consulted. They bear little relation to the facts either of nationality or economics. The Ewes, the Yorubas, the Hausas are examples of peoples who are split between French and British territories. The partition of the former German colonies of Togoland and the Cameroons introduced new artificial frontiers dividing peoples who had been closely associated as regards both their culture and their economic life. Thus—while the new national movements have accepted for the time being State boundaries as they are, and have conducted their struggles around the problems of Africans living in a given colonial territory (C.P.P. in the Gold Coast and British Togoland, N.C.N.C. in Nigeria and the British Cameroons, Rassemblement Démocratique Africain in French West and Equatorial Africa, French Togoland and the French Cameroons)—this does not mean that they regard existing frontiers as sacrosanct. Popular movements are already in being—like the All-Ewe Conference—which seek to promote the unity of a particular tribe or people irrespective of colonial frontiers. It is not surprising that a leading Ewe writer should have quoted with approval this sentence from Professor Carr's *Conditions of Peace*:

'The conception of Africa as a series of vast and more or less uniform areas divided from one another by arbitrary geometrical frontiers must give place to an administrative patchwork based on the self-determination of the tribal unit.'

The achievements of the C.P.P. (whose leadership includes a number of Ewes) have undoubtedly stimulated political activity among the Ewes in French Togoland. To a less extent the development of self-governing institutions, and the emergence of the Cameroons National Federation, in the British Cameroons, has had repercussions in the French Cameroons (where a well-organized trade union movement already exists). In the same way leaders of the Hausa communities in the French Niger Province have begun to interest themselves in the political problems facing the Hausa peoples in northern Nigeria.

While contact between national movements in British and French territories is at present restricted both by transport and language difficulties (as well as official discouragement), the idea of some form of Union of West African States as an end to be worked for is not a new one. It was in part implicit in the activities of the National Congress of British West Africa and the work of the late Casely Hayford. More recently it has influenced the political thinking both of Dr. Azikiwe and of Dr. Nkrumah; indeed one of the allegations made against Dr. Nkrumah in the Watson Commission Report of 1948 was that he was interested in the establishment of a Union of West African Socialist Republics.

Such a conception seems indeed to be wholly reasonable. Even if Nigeria, French West Africa and the Gold Coast have sufficient population and resources to justify their existence as separate states, clearly Portuguese Guinea, the Gambia and Fernando Po have not. Already colonial governments, with their long-standing rivalries and suspicions, have found it necessary to develop some of the mechanisms of regional planning—e.g. in regard to labour migration, pest control, anti-malarial measures, air transport, etc.

Any extensive development of rail and road transport, or hydro-electric power, or mineral resources, would necessarily cut across existing frontiers and would involve treating West Africa as a single economic unit. Thus it seems possible that the present phase—of struggle for self-government for particular territories—will gradually be succeeded by a new phase—of struggle for the closer association of these territories and the regrouping of peoples within a more integrated West Africa. Such a movement for unification would, incidentally, make it more possible for the peoples of West Africa to resist the pressures of imperialism, from whatever quarter these might come.

National Unity

For the present the question of closer West African union is of less practical importance than the question of achieving national unity within existing State boundaries.

In Nigeria, in particular, but also in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, West African nationalists are confronted with the internal tensions between particular national groups. In one sense, of course,

these tensions are simply the growing-pains that accompany the birth of a nation.

Those Europeans who argue that the idea of a Nigerian nation is a fiction, and that what in fact exists in Nigeria is simply a conglomeration of tribal groups—Hausas, Kanuris, Yorubas, Edos, Ibo, Ibibios, etc.—are making much the same point as the Earl of Warwick, in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, when he says to De Stogumber:

'A Frenchman! Where did you pick up that expression? Are these Burgundians and Bretons and Picards and Gascons beginning to call themselves Frenchmen, just as our fellows are beginning to call themselves Englishmen? They actually talk of France and England as their own countries. Theirs, if you please! What is to become of me and you if that way of thinking comes into fashion?'

West African nationalists are indeed rightly sceptical of the tendency of British commentators to emphasize the factors making for tension between national groups and to ignore or underrate the factors making for co-operation. They point out that historically—in India, Burma, Ceylon, Malay, etc.—the existence of a 'national problem' has been made the justification for the exercise of British colonial power. The argument that 'if Britain left territory X tomorrow, these A's, B's and C's would be at one another's throats' is familiar in the literature of imperial apologetics. None the less it remains true that a 'national problem' exists in West Africa, and that any study of the questions facing the peoples of West Africa during the period of transition to self-government must take account of it.

It is sometimes said that the main cause of tension between different national groups is the existence of different cultures or historic conflicts which have projected themselves into the present. In the past the largely immigrant Creole population of Freetown (Christian in its religion and Western in its habits) tended to regard the indigenous tribes of the Protectorate as ignorant and ferocious barbarians. The Akan peoples of the Gold Coast, particularly the Ashanti, used to carry on intermittent slave raids against the peoples of the Northern Territories. In the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast the

Conkomba people have traditionally stood in a servile relationship to the Dagombas. The Hausa peoples of northern Nigeria, belonging to an ancient civilization, Moslem for the past six centuries, have tended to look upon the pagan communities of the coastal belt as morally and intellectually inferior. In such ways as these past relationships have, no doubt, some bearing upon the contemporary situation.

If by 'culture' one means simply the way in which a people organize their social life—the language they use, the clothes they wear, the houses they build, the food they eat, the songs and dances they use, the way in which they worship God, get their living, and manage their family and personal relationships—then certainly in every West African territory many different cultures co-exist. In Nigeria, Yorubas, Edos, Ibos, Ibibios, Hausas, Fulanis, Kanuris, Tivs and the large number of smaller tribal groups are culturally distinct. Within a given national or tribal group—e.g. the Ibos—there are important differences of culture. The culture of Moslem communities tends to differ from that of Christians, pagans and semi-Christianized pagans. The culture of the Europeanized middle-class differs from that of the mass of the farming population or of the new proletariat.

But 'tensions' are not identical with 'differences.' To explain such tensions as at present exist between national groups in Nigeria, for example, other factors besides history and culture have to be taken into account. As Mallam Muhammadu, Waziri of Bornu, remarked at the 1950 Ibadan Conference (speaking particularly of the North-South relationship):

'I think there is a very strong misunderstanding which hinders our unity. I do not know what is really the cause of this misunderstanding, but I think it is not tribal, linguistic or religious differences. Although these things may have something to do with it, but they are not the real causes. It must be something else.'²²

What then is this 'something else'?

Differences of economic standards and opportunities clearly play an important part. The income per head of southern Nigeria is well above the income per head in the North. Other methods of

measuring the standard of living give the same general picture, as the following table shows:²³

NIGERIA			
Per million inhabitants	North	West	East
Hospital beds	215	235	590
Dispensaries	25	41	49
Primary Schools	106	821	654
Secondary Schools	0.4	6	20
Teacher Training Institutions	2	6	9

One consequence of the relative backwardness, from the standpoint of economic and educational standards, of northern Nigeria has been the flow northward of educated southerners to take jobs as clerks, accountants, foremen, railway staff, and the like. These southerners live for the most part segregated in separate communities, 'Sabon Garis' ('new towns'), in the centres in which they work. Thus North-South tension tends to reflect both this disparity of standards, the growing dissatisfaction of northerners with the present inequality of opportunities, and the opposition which a semi-privileged class of immigrants, living in ghetto-like conditions, is liable to provoke.

A Hausa labourer, working under an Ibo foreman, is liable to identify Ibos, or southerners in general, with all the objectionable characteristics sometimes attributed to foremen. The same general pattern of relationships tends to occur in the case of the Gold Coast (again between southerners and northerners) and in Sierra Leone (between Freetown Creoles and the Protectorate peoples). In both cases one group is economically and educationally more advanced, and the other more 'backward.' Hence there is a tendency for members of the more advanced group to obtain the better paid, more responsible, clerical, supervisory or administrative type of job, and to develop in consequence an attitude of social superiority to members of the more 'backward' group working in worse-paid labouring jobs. This kind of situation is familiar in Europe.

Economic competition can also occur, and give rise to tension between national groups, where there is no sharp difference in standards and opportunities, e.g. in the case of Yorubas and Ibos. It was the Yorubas (with the Efiks of Calabar) who were first drawn into the zone of British influence; who went to mission schools;

who produced the clerks and teachers that the colonial system required; who became traders and entrepreneurs; who threw up an African intelligentsia. Later, in the period between two world wars, the development of communications, trade, and mission-sponsored education in the eastern provinces presented new opportunities to the Ibos. The existence of serious overpopulation in parts of their territory (e.g. the Owerri province), and the equalitarian traditions of their society, were additional factors which stimulated the Ibos to look to education, commerce and emigration as ways of improving their economic position. This is the classic type of situation in which friction between national groups is liable to arise. The Yorubas have now lost their former advantages and find themselves in competition with Ibos for higher education, for civil service appointments, for contracts, for markets, etc. Not unnaturally this produces a tendency to hostility on the part of some middle-class Yorubas towards the supposedly pushing, enterprising Ibos, and on the part of some middle-class Ibos towards the supposedly more traditionalist Yorubas.

These tensions can be explained in political as well as economic terms. Within each of the three major national groups in Nigeria—Yorubas, Ibos and Hausas—there are sections which adopt a chauvinist attitude, i.e. which assert the superior and special claims of Yorubas, Ibos or Hausas. This type of political outlook, which can perhaps be described as 'tribal nationalism,' is mainly to be found among the dominant classes in each community. But its influence is important, since it tends to promote internal disunity and to turn men's minds away from the pressing problems of liberation and social change. 'Tribal nationalism' can in fact be regarded as a conservative political theory which strengthens the position of traditional authority and retards the effort to achieve a self-governing Nigerian nation.

There is no doubt that 'tribal nationalism' has grown stronger in Nigeria during the past few years, and has been one of the main reasons for the failure of the national movement to achieve a more effective form of organization. This has been due in part to the activities of such bodies as Egbe Omo Oduduwa among the Yoruba, the Ibo Union and the Jami'ya (or Northern People's Congress). While these bodies are concerned with the culture and social welfare

of Yorubas, Ibos and northerners, respectively, they tend in practice to propagate a particularist political outlook: in fact there are times when they mix tribal culture and tribal politics in roughly the same proportions as the Orange Lodges in Northern Ireland. The aims of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (or 'society of the descendants of Oduduwa'—the legendary ancestor of the Yorubas) are stated in its constitution to be:

'To unite the various clans and tribes in Yorubaland and generally create and actively foster the idea of a single nationalism throughout Yorubaland.

'To recognize and maintain the monarchical and similar institutions of Yorubaland: to plan for their complete enlightenment and democratization, to acknowledge the leadership of the Yoruba Obas. . . .

'To accelerate the emergence of a virile modernized and efficient Yoruba state with its own individuality within the Federal State of Nigeria.'

Thus Egbe Omo Oduduwa links together the two principles of Yoruba nationalism and legitimacy. Its leadership represents an alliance between the Obas and the Yoruba educated business and professional class. As Lord Hailey remarks, 'it may be expected to oppose any change in the present system of native administration which may seriously affect the position of the Native Authorities in the Western Provinces.'²⁴ Egbe Omo Oduduwa encourages the Yorubas to think of themselves as Yorubas first and Nigerians second, to pay more attention to the ways in which Yorubas differ from the other peoples of Nigeria than to the interests they have in common, and to respect traditional Yoruba authority. In somewhat the same way the Northern People's Congress emphasizes the peculiarities of the northern way of life and preaches passive obedience to Emirs. Thus separatism and social conservatism tend to work hand in hand.

The British administration also contributes to these tensions between national groups—not necessarily because officials consciously pursue a policy of 'divide and rule,' but because to rule by dividing is a characteristic of colonial government. The attitude of the

administration is in fact very much that described by Miss Perham in her foreword to Mr. Awolowo's *Path to Nigerian Freedom*:

'If Mr. Awolowo is right, as I believe he is, that in face of the deep divisions of race, culture and religion in Nigeria, political advance through natural groups and regions is the only way to a wider unity, then Britain may for long be required to provide the framework which holds these groups together until they are able to fuse into unity or federation.'

The existence of divisions between national groups is regarded as a justification for the continuance of British power. But at the same time British power is applied on the assumption that these divisions exist and will continue—that the feudal Moslem North has to be 'protected' from the disintegrating influence of the capitalist freethinking South; that Ibos in the East and Yorubas in the West must preserve their own traditional forms of political organization. The basic principle underlying the present three-region system of government is that Nigeria consists of three nations, and that each nation must be prevented (by an impartial British administration) from encroaching upon the rights and interests of the other two. In this way British power becomes itself a cause of divisions, and throws its weight on the side of the forces of particularism against those making for Nigerian unity.

While it is claimed that the effect of British policy is to provide a framework which holds the national groups together, it could equally well be argued that it creates a situation in which the maximum encouragement is given to tribal nationalism, and any political adventurer who proclaims himself a champion of the natural rights of Yorubas, Ibos or northerners can expect to succeed. In the case of the North in particular—as Dr. Miller has shown in his writings—the British administrative framework has meant in practice the freezing of the social and political system of the North in the condition in which Lugard found it in 1900. The paternal care which the administration has lavished upon the North has had the effect of preserving intact not merely northern culture but northern despotism, northern chauvinism and northern backwardness.

The 'national problem' has been discussed mainly with reference

to Nigeria, since it is there that it arises in its most acute form. It would seem generally true, however, that in any West African territory internal divisions between different national groups cannot be regarded as simply the product of historical and cultural differences. They also arise in large part from differences in economic and social standards between more 'advanced' and more 'backward' communities: from the tendency of the dominant classes in each community to develop an attitude of 'tribal nationalism,' in an effort to safeguard themselves against radical social change: and from the influence of the British administration which, however well-intentioned, tends to assume the inevitability of communal division and conflict and thus indirectly to promote it.

But this situation is not static. While there are forces at work which stimulate tension between particular national groups there are also other, more powerful, forces which make for common action. Of these the most important is the national movement itself, which encourages men and women to think of themselves as citizens of the Gold Coast (or 'Ghanans'), or of Nigeria, first and foremost, rather than as belonging to a particular tribal or linguistic group. In the Gold Coast, where the original situation was more favourable, the feeling of being a Fanti, Ashanti, Ga, Ewe, Nzima-man, etc., has already become largely merged in the wider loyalty to Ghana. In the Northern Territories, where a few years ago it used to be argued by administrators that Gold Coast nationalism was regarded as an alien southerners' movement, the C.P.P. has now established itself firmly with some fifty local branches, and a working alliance with the N.T. representatives in the House of Assembly. The northerners, formerly regarded by the administration as a race apart, have now been recognized as having the same basic needs and problems as the peoples of the South.

The C.P.P. also recognized that national unity can only be achieved where economic standards and opportunities are approximately equal, and has begun to undertake the task of raising the standards of the more backward North to the level of the more advanced South. While the problem of northern Nigeria is on a much larger scale, there is the same opportunity there for overcoming existing tensions by a rapid improvement of living standards. Once the northern Nigerian has the same opportunities of advance-

ment as the Yoruba or the Ibo, one major cause of national conflict will have been overcome.

The very way in which West African society is changing contributes to the weakening of divisions between national groups. An increasing number of West Africans, whatever their tribe, are drawn into the new capitalist society which the West has brought to Africa. In Lagos, Enugu, Kano, Port Harcourt and Jos the differences between Yorubas, Ibos and Hausas are less important than the common interests of clerks, teachers, railwaymen, lorry drivers and market women. No doubt these cosmopolitan centres are 'unrepresentative'; but, through newspapers, migration, trade and contact of one kind and another, they do tend to influence men's outlook in the remoter towns and villages. Tribal loyalties surviving from a pre-capitalist form of society are under constant pressure from the new loyalties which arise with the development of a modern society with its network of political organizations, trade unions, youth organizations and the like.

The problem of the place of chiefs in modern West African society is one that has already been referred to. Here I want only to summarize the main elements of the problem.

There are chiefs and chiefs. The institution of chiefship differs profoundly from area to area. The status and outlook of a hereditary Fulani Amir are different in kind from the status and outlook of an elective chief among the Fantis of the Gold Coast. While it is reasonable to regard chiefs in general as conservative in their attitude to politics—and while (with few exceptions) they have held aloof from the national movements—yet Nana Kobina Nketsie, paramount chief of British Sekondi, an ex-railwayman and C.P.P. supporter, was sentenced in 1950 to three years' hard labour and fined £200 for his part in the general strike.

Outside the Amirates of northern Nigeria, there are two factors which tend to prevent chiefs from becoming a class apart from the people, with their own clearly defined political aims. One is the strong tradition that the chief belongs among his people, and should act as their protector and mouthpiece. The other is the fact that elective chiefs have normally, before becoming chiefs, had experience of doing a normal job—as U.A.C. clerk, medical orderly, cocoa farmer, and the like.

As we have seen, there are valid reasons why, within West African national movements, there should be a strong current of opinion which is critical of chiefs. In the case of the Gold Coast one of these reasons was stated bluntly in the Watson Commission's Report:

'We have found an intense suspicion that the Chiefs are being used by the Government as an instrument for the delay if not the suppression of the political aspirations of the people. The fact that destooling—once the absolute privilege of a dissatisfied people, if need be exercised capriciously and violently—has been made the subject of a well-defined code, under the supervision of the Government, is itself the object of grave suspicion. The view is advanced that, so long as the Chief accepts and supports the Government policy, he will receive Government support, however much he has become the object of dislike to his people. That there is no evidence to support this view is beside the point. The suspicion exists.'

Other factors, of course, enter into the nationalist attitude to chiefs. Traditionally the chief is a leader in war—hence his main social function is one that he is no longer able to exercise. Chiefs still tend to be chosen for their good looks and strength rather than for their intellectual power and administrative ability. A relatively expensive hierarchy of paramount chiefs and lesser chiefs has to be maintained out of public funds, and the cost of the institution becomes even greater when, in addition to four-figure incomes and liberal expense accounts (not to mention in some cases incomes from trading profits and ground rents) some chiefs in western and northern Nigeria receive generous salaries as Ministers or members of the House of Chiefs. Arbitrary and oppressive chiefly rule is by no means a thing of the past, as appears from the report of the Commission of Enquiry on the alleged abuse of powers by the Wenchihene and his councillors:

'The Wenchihene violated natural law by sitting as judge in his own case; Wenchihene and Councillors were most unwise in prosecuting no less than 163 persons and mulcting them of more than £1,500. The humiliations inflicted on the people who appeared before

the Wenchihene and Councillors, such as crawling on knees and rubbing mouths on the ground, were, to say the least, most obnoxious in 1951, and such practices were not characteristic of chiefs in this country.'²⁵

But the main ground of criticism is undoubtedly the belief that, in many cases, chiefs have ceased to be the servants of their peoples and symbols of tribal solidarity, and have allowed themselves to be used as little more than administrative agents of the imperial power.

'Time was when our chiefs sat only on Consecrated Stools and spoke through linguists, but today many "sit on Gazettes" and allow themselves to be treated by District Commissioners as if they are inferiors.'²⁶

These criticisms do not mean that even the most radical nationalists wish to abolish chiefs. Such a policy would receive no support from public opinion. They do, however, want to abolish 'indirect rule'—and to substitute more democratic forms of local administration. Since no society can for long afford two parallel sets of political institutions to serve a single purpose, this is likely to mean in practice the gradual transformation of chiefs into dignitaries with purely ritual functions. Any attempt to resist a change in this direction, and to preserve or build up the political power of the chiefs, would make it more difficult for the institution itself to survive. For, granted the strength of the sentiments and loyalties which still attach to the office of chief, they are residual sentiments and loyalties, inherited from a social order which is already in process of decay.

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CHAPTER IV

Economic Problems in British West Africa

SINCE 1945 attention has been more than ever directed towards the problem of under-developed countries—countries, that is to say, at a pre-industrial stage of economic development, usually with a colonial or semi-colonial political status. British West Africa is of especial importance in this connection.

It has become increasingly recognized that the poverty of these areas acts as a drag on the prosperity of more developed countries, and that the immense disparity between living standards in most of Asia and Africa on the one hand, and Western Europe and North America on the other, is a fertile source of political friction and a possible cause of a third world war. It is recognized, further, that there is nothing in the nature of things which condemns large parts of the earth's surface to remain perpetually backward. A report published by the United Nations in May 1951, called *Measures for the Economic Development of Under-Developed Countries*, says that while 'it is theoretically possible that a country be poor because its resources are poor, and in spite of the resources which it has being as fully developed as current knowledge permits . . . we do not believe that there are any such countries.' And, further, that 'whatever their resources may be, all countries are currently in a position where their national incomes could be greatly increased by better utilization of what they have' (pp. 3, 4).

All of these considerations apply to the continent of Africa, including those large parts of West Africa which come within the British Empire. Territories which are poor in economic development are generally also poor in the supply of statistics. This is true also of British West Africa. Statistics of birth and death rates, maternal and infantile mortality exist hardly at all outside a few exceptional urban areas. It is impossible to do other than guess at the size of the National Income of these lands, though, from estimates

for comparable territories in the United Nations *Review of Economic Conditions in Africa* (U.N. Economic and Social Council, February 1951), it seems improbable that it exceeds annually £20 a head—compared with about £250 a head in the United Kingdom. Standards of feeding, housing and welfare services are correspondingly low. The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization reports in its *Review and Outlook, 1951*, that throughout the continent 'diet is based on a single staple food of starchy nature, such as manioc, maize or rice. . . . Vegetables and fruits have only a secondary place in the diet, while foods rich in protein, especially those of animal origin, are eaten only in very small quantities, and the lack of protein is one of the most serious defects in the diet of Africans. . . . The inadequacy of food supplies is also reflected in the wide prevalence of many other deficiency diseases.' Anyone with personal experience of British West Africa will be aware that such conditions hold here as elsewhere throughout tropical Africa.

Nigeria, with about thirty million inhabitants, had 331 doctors in 1949; and the total of beds in general hospitals, maternity homes and rural dispensaries was 8,500, or about one to every three thousand, for a population which suffers heavily from malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy ('unfortunately more common than in practically any country in the world'—Colonial Office Report, *Nigeria*, 1950, p. 9), venereal and sundry other diseases. Medical expenditure from public sources was just under £3 million during 1949–50, or nearly half a crown a head, compared with about £9 a head for the United Kingdom. No reliable estimate exists of the degree of literacy in Nigeria, but it is certainly extremely small. Public expenditure on education in Nigeria for the same year amounted to just short of £3 million.

Low as they are, these figures represent some advance on pre-war rates of expenditure which were, for 1938, nearly half a million pounds for health and just under £300,000 for education. Even allowing for the substantial rise in prices as compared with pre-war—much greater than the increase in the United Kingdom—this represents an advance in real terms, but remains grossly inadequate. Yet inadequate social services merely reflect an inadequate availability of material wealth.

I have concentrated so far on Nigeria because it is by far the

largest and most populous country in British West Africa. With its population of about thirty millions it exceeds more than six-fold that of the Gold Coast, which has about four million inhabitants. Sierra Leone's population is two million and the Gambia's a quarter of a million.

All these countries show, in slightly varying degrees, the same symptoms of stunted economic development resulting in malnutrition, disease and an average expectation of life almost certainly below thirty. In fact, these four countries share many economic characteristics with all other colonial countries—there is a distinctive colonial pattern of economic development which we should now proceed to examine.

Colonial Characteristics

The first characteristic of a colonial economy is that the productivity of labour is exceedingly low. While trade has grown substantially from the replacement of subsistence farming by cash crops and the increasing exploitation of mineral wealth, there has been no corresponding growth in output per head, so that widespread poverty exists alongside growing wealth. Primitive technique prevails among farm workers and handicraftsmen alike, due to the almost complete absence of modern machinery. 'Various sizes and types of hoe, the cutlass and simple knives constitute almost the whole range of African farming equipment' (Colonial Office: *Report of a Survey of Problems in the Mechanization of Native Agriculture in Typical African Colonies*, 1950, p. 22). The Report contrasts this with the dozens of farming implements habitually used by peasants in China—a country not, in the past, remarkable for high technical levels. Unfortunately, the results of contact with the world economy have not been merely to leave African farming technique where it was. 'Especially in tropical Africa, loss of soil fertility under constant cropping presents a problem to which no over-all solution has yet been found. The system of shifting cultivation practised traditionally by Africans . . . is only possible where cultivable land is plentiful in relation to population and it is not an efficient means of production for a market. . . . In some areas, particularly in West Africa, deforestation has already resulted in considerable deterioration' (U.N. *Review of Economic Conditions in Africa*, 1951, pp. 20–21). The popu-

lation of West Africa is increasing by something like 1 per cent a year, and methods of farming, adequate for conditions in which periods of tilling could be interspersed with long periods of fallow, produce certain erosion under present social conditions.

The poverty resulting from low labour productivity is accentuated by the fantastic wastage of labour power in unproductive activity—a second characteristic of colonial economies. It is wrong to suppose that in undeveloped countries a high proportion of the labour force must be productively employed. On the contrary there is, in probably all peasant economies, and certainly in West Africa, a large amount of concealed unemployment wherever there is too little land to keep the farming population fully employed. A good deal of this potentially productive labour spills over into trade and, in addition, poor communications and the small scale on which Africans are able to buy involves a very large proportion of the population in full or part-time trade. P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey have remarked that: 'There is in West Africa widespread involuntary idleness of unskilled labour, resulting from lack of other co-operant resources, especially capital, to set it to work' (*Economic Journal*, December 1951). There is, for instance, an immense trade in empty containers, 'kerosene, cigarette and soup tins, flour, salt, sugar and cement bags and beer bottles' (Bauer and Yamey). So many people are employed in trade because: 'The purchase of a box of matches is often still a wholesale transaction as the buyer frequently breaks bulk and re-sells the contents to the final consumer in small bundles of ten to fifteen matches.' Similarly, sugar is sold in lots of three cubes, trade perfume by the drop, salt by the cigarette tin and cheap biscuits in threes and sixes. Most of these traders remain very poor, but 'trade is attractive even for very low rewards in view of the absence of more profitable alternatives.' If more profitable alternatives were to appear as the result of economic development, there is here an immense reserve of labour which could be utilized—providing always that the support and enthusiasm of the people had been mobilized behind the development programme.

Trade, then, is extensively developed in West Africa, especially in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. This has given rise to a third characteristic of colonial economies, which has been growing more

pronounced since the end of the first World War—the growth of a native bourgeoisie in the countryside and in the towns. An enquiry into land distribution in a backward village in the Gold Coast in the 1930's showed that nearly half the cocoa crop was produced by one-tenth of the farmers, nearly all of whom employed some wage labour.

The growing output of cash crops has also brought wealth to a small minority of successful middlemen who act for produce buyers who, in turn, sell to big firms which are agents for the Marketing Boards. A typical member of the new urban bourgeoisie is described by P. C. Lloyd (*West Africa*, January 17, 1953): 'The richest man in Ado-Ekiti (western Nigeria) today has an estate of approximately £50,000; he owns a shop, several lorries, two cars, many houses including the one in which he lives which has probably cost £3,000 to build.'

This growth of a West African bourgeoisie in towns and villages (almost 30 per cent of Nigerians live in towns of over 5,000 inhabitants) is a most significant factor in the recent political history of these territories. So also is the corresponding growth of a wage-earning class, the basis of a labour movement; though much of the labour force, especially on the cocoa farms, is still migrant in character.

A fourth characteristic of colonial economies is the combination of unbalanced foreign trade with an unbalanced domestic economy. Even for Africa the Gambia is an extreme case, with 97 per cent of its exports consisting of groundnuts (1948), but other territories manifest the same characteristics to a comparable degree. Of the exports from the Gold Coast (1949) cocoa accounted for 68 per cent, gold for 14 per cent and manganese for 9 per cent—91 per cent of all exports consisting of only three commodities. Nigeria's exports show the same extreme and dangerous unbalance, with 34 per cent consisting of palm oil and kernels, 23 per cent cocoa and 21 per cent groundnuts—78 per cent of its exports made up of only three commodities.

Since the exports of these countries account for a large proportion of the total national output (more than 30 per cent in the case of Nigeria, for example), an unbalanced export trade accentuates an already existing unbalance in the domestic economy. This unbalance

results in too little land devoted to food for home consumption. 'Shortages of local food supplies in areas in West Africa specializing in cocoa and palm oil production, appear to have become permanent' (F.A.O. Report, 1951, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, p. 33), with the direct result, already referred to above, that the people are condemned to a diet excessive in starch and totally inadequate in protein. (See *The Native Economies of Nigeria*, ed. M. Perham, p. 102.)

Excessive dependence on the export of a small number of primary commodities also introduces a serious element of instability into the economy. The sharp collapse in the prices of primary produce during the 1930's brought widespread suffering to the peoples of West Africa—expressed in the Aba riots (Nigeria), in 1929, and the cocoa hold-up by the farmers of the Gold Coast in 1937–38, two early economic expressions of what has now broadened into a political movement for national independence.

Changes in Economic Thought

This brief description of poverty in West Africa and the attempt to identify some, at least, of its principal causes, would have been rejected by most economists and colonial administrators during the 1930's. The prevailing view then was that sound economic principles dictated a division of labour on an international scale, under which some countries should specialize in manufactures and others in primary production. To develop manufactures in colonial countries would be 'uneconomic' since (a) either such manufactures would be unable to compete with established manufacturing industries in Western Europe and North America; or (b) they would be able to compete, which was an additional reason for discouraging them. Lord Hailey put the second point gently when he wrote: '... for many years to come, the African colonial dependencies of Great Britain, France and Belgium are unlikely to give active encouragement to industries of a type which will compete with their home manufacture.' (*African Survey*, p. 982.)

It was concluded that the correct pattern of economic development for the colonies was one in which they would concentrate on those products which they could produce comparatively cheaply and economically. Necessarily, such products would be

for export, since at prevailing living standards home demand was too small to provide an adequate market. In return for exporting the primary products which they produced cheaply the colonial countries would be able to import textiles and other manufactured merchandise more cheaply than they could be made at home. Thus, both developed and undeveloped countries would benefit by specializing along their own lines and exchanging the results.

This theory, while fitting in well with prevailing ideas of economic liberalism, ignored almost all the relevant facts.

New capital investment in manufacturing industry, left to itself, will take place close to existing markets, communications, supplies of skilled labour: that is, where it exists already. Prevailing inequalities between countries will be accentuated, not diminished. Where capital is invested in undeveloped areas it will be with a view, largely, to increasing the profitability of existing investments in metropolitan countries. That is to say, investment in undeveloped countries will be limited to the production and transport of minerals and export crops required by industry in Western Europe and North America.

Economic development, of a sort, will certainly occur, but it will be one-sided in emphasis and limited in scope. It will not 'pay' to invest in manufacturing industry because of the lack of a domestic market, and domestic markets will be lacking because of the absence of industrial concentrations. It will not 'pay' to invest money in communications linking up the interior, because of the small traffic resulting from the lack of industry.

Industrial development will be further stultified for lack of railways. Modern agricultural techniques are applied on any scale only on European-owned estates and plantations—hardly existing in British West Africa. Where peasant farming remains it remains primitive, for investment in small farming takes the form of usury—it is rarely if ever profitable in a commercial sense to provide capital equipment to peasants. But, as we have seen already, stagnating technique, at least in African conditions, means deteriorating fertility and extending erosion.

Finally, the very cheapness of labour, resulting from all these factors, acts as a further drag on mechanization in such industry as may be established under these conditions. For cheap labour is often

more profitable than expensive machinery, especially where the technical level of the population is low. And it is hardly 'economic' to train technicians in the absence of machinery for them to use.

The classical economic theories might give different results in a world in which both capital and labour flowed freely across national boundaries, and in which monopoly was not a factor—which is another way of saying that they are irrelevant in the world which exists, and in any world which is likely to exist.

Terms of Trade

The extremely uneven development of the world's capital resources, which has been a pronounced feature of the past three-quarters of a century, has had one further result. Countries which specialized in the production of primary products, and which depended almost exclusively on imports for their supplies of raw materials, suffered continuously from deteriorating terms of trade.

As has been said already, colonial territories produce primary goods for export while they import manufactured goods. Through improvements in technique and mechanization, the cost of production of industrial manufactures falls much more rapidly than the cost of production of primary products. One might expect, therefore, that the selling prices of manufactures would fall more rapidly with technical progress than would the prices of primary products—in other words, one might expect the terms of trade to have moved in favour of the primary producing countries, since, where monopoly conditions are absent, selling prices are closely related to production costs.

In fact, the opposite has been happening for well over half a century. The extent to which it has happened reflects the strength of monopoly in international trading relations. Writers as diverse as Hilferding, J. A. Hobson and Lenin have stressed the connection between modern Imperialism (*post* 1870) and the role of the colonies as sources of monopoly profit.

In 1949 the United Nations published a Report on *Relative Prices of Exports and Imports of Under-Developed Countries*, which concluded that: 'Such general statistical data as are available indicate that from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the eve of the

second World War, a period of over half a century, there was a secular downward trend in the prices of primary goods relative to the prices of manufactured goods. On an average, a given quantity of primary exports would pay, at the end of this period, for only 60 per cent of the quantity of manufactured goods which it could buy at the beginning of the period' (p. 7). Such data as exist indicate that the producers of cocoa, palm products and groundnuts—the principal exports of British West Africa—shared fully in this deterioration in the terms of trade.

If the average local price of cocoa on the Gold Coast is compared with the price of imported cotton cloth, for a number of pre-war years, we can get as good an indication as is available at the moment as to what happened to the terms of trade.

	1	2	3
	Price of cloth (Shillings sq. yd.)	Average local price of cocoa (per cwt.)	Ratio of Column 2 to Column 1 (1939 100)
		s. d.	
1926	1.13	54 10	182
1932	0.54	16 2	112
1938	0.57	13 0	85

It will be seen that between 1926 and 1932 the price of cloth fell by slightly more than half, while the local price of cocoa fell by rather more than two-thirds.

Between 1932 and 1938, while the local price of cocoa continued to decline, the price of cloth to the African slightly rose.

Taking commodity prices in general, 1932 was a slump year compared with 1926, while 1938 was a good year compared with 1932. During each six-year period, however, of the twelve years prior to the outbreak of war, the terms of trade deteriorated for the African. In the years of slump the decline was spectacular; in years of recovery it continued, but at a slower rate. (Figures from *West Africa*, December 8, 1951.)

The reason for this state of affairs is not far to seek. About a quarter of the imports of Nigeria, to take one example, consist of clothing and textiles. The traders who import such merchandise into the country are relatively few in number. The United Africa Company (a subsidiary of Unilever) alone accounts for nearly a third of the total merchandise sold in British West Africa. Thousands of

small peasant farmers depend on the sale of their produce for their ability to purchase manufactures.

When the price of their produce rises, the increased spending power which results can be 'mopped up,' without too much difficulty, by increases in the prices of the clothing and other manufactured products which they buy. When their produce prices fall, they tend to maintain their output so as to keep their individual incomes as high as possible. The total effect will be to reduce further the price of their produce. By contrast, the more highly organized manufacturers can agree on price maintenance by restriction of output; and, where they find this difficult, the state will come to their assistance with measures—of which the Cotton Spindles Act of 1936 is merely one example—to destroy productive capacity so as to cushion the fall in prices. Recently published figures in *West Africa* indicate the extent to which, during the ten years prior to 1939, the farmers of the West Coast suffered in this way.

During the war years there was a further sharp deterioration in the terms of trade for the Gold Coast cocoa farmers.

COST OF LIVING AND COCOA PRICE INDICES*

	1939-40	1943-44	1944-45
Cost of Living Index (G.C. Dept. of Labour)	100	169	170
Index of Farmers' Prices	100	83	141
Price Index Deflated by Cost of Living	100	49	83

* P. Ady, *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics*, October 1947.

The claim now frequently made that the post-war establishment of Produce Marketing Boards, with policies of price stabilization, has substantially changed the situation for the West Coast farmers will be examined a little later. There can be no doubt, however, that these farmers shouldered more than their share of the burden of price changes—whether prices were rising or falling.

We have discussed, so far, two aspects of the economy of British West Africa—aspects not peculiar to this part of the world, but characteristic of colonial economies in general: excessive concentration on the production of a restricted number of cash crops for export, and the stunted development of manufacturing industry.

It remains to point out that these two aspects are closely inter-related, in that unstable commodity prices produce an unstable home market and hence an environment decidedly unfavourable to industrial development. Conversely, backward industry at home accentuates dependence on imported manufactures which makes it harder for consumers to resist increases in the prices of imported merchandise. The exported cocoa of the Gold Coast fetched £11,700,000 in 1927 and—for about the same quantity of cocoa—£4 millions in 1934.

Under such conditions it is hard to see how domestic manufactures, catering for the home market and bringing some independence of imported merchandise, could flourish.

Profits of Foreign Companies

There is one further aspect of colonial economies, much less marked in West than in Central Africa, but none the less important—the profits made by foreign companies engaged in mining, shipping and trading.

Profits extracted from the Gold Coast in the past have been enormous. The Ashanti Goldfields Corporation—producing nearly half the gold output of the country—paid such dividends as 150 per cent in 1930, 125 per cent in 1932, 85 per cent in 1935 and 95 per cent in 1937. (Rita Hinden, *Plan for Africa*, chapter 14.)

Diamond investment, though less spectacular, was nevertheless healthy, with the Consolidated African Selection Trust, Ltd., paying dividends and bonuses of 60 per cent in 1930, 20 per cent in 1932, 65 per cent in 1935 and about 30 per cent (dividend tax free) in 1937.

Altogether, from a total capital investment of about £15 millions, mineral dividends in 1938 totalled just under £2 millions. Such generous emoluments to capital were not unconnected with wage rates averaging 1s. 5d. a day and a total wage bill of less than £1 million.

Under such conditions it was inevitable that the demand for the companies to make a larger contribution to the economy of the country from which their profits were derived should be made by the nationalist movement. In 1938 the Gold Coast Government, from the proceeds of mineral royalties and export taxes, received £400,000. Inevitably, one of the first tasks of the Convention

People's Party, on assuming government responsibility in the Gold Coast in 1951, was seen to be a re-assessment of the contribution made by mining companies to the economy of the country from which their profits were drawn, and a Minerals Duty Bill, introduced into the Legislative Assembly early in 1952, was designed to increase the duties payable by mines from £800,000 to £2 millions in a full year.

It may be noted, however, that under post-war conditions, gold-mining is much less profitable than it used to be. With the dollar price of gold established at about a third above the level of the 1930's, selling prices have been unable to keep pace with soaring costs, and gold-mining on the Gold Coast, as in South Africa, has suffered to the benefit of the United States economy. None the less the profits are still substantial, and in other respects, too, West Africa is a profitable field for foreign companies.

The trading profits of Unilever, in 1951, fell just short of £70 millions. It is impossible to calculate the proportion of these profits obtained from West Africa, but since the trade turnover of the United Africa Company (a private company whose profits are unpublished) was more than a sixth of that of the parent concern, they must have amounted to many millions of pounds. The profits of Elder Dempster, in 1951, amounted to well over a million and a quarter pounds and those of the Bisichi Tin Company came to more than £600,000.

The Marketing Boards

It is often contended that whereas the relationship of the United Kingdom to its colonies before 1939 was one of exploitation, imperial policy has evolved since then, and more especially since 1945; that the Empire has been turned into a Commonwealth; and that the change in name reflected a more fundamental change in the character of the relationship. We shall examine the claim, so far as the West African colonies are concerned, to find out whether such undoubted changes as the Produce Marketing Boards, the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, and the Overseas Resources Development Act, have radically altered the colonial status of the economies concerned; and whether they really represent, as is frequently claimed, the end of colonial exploitation and its replace-

Indeed a very good book. Good.

ment by a relationship based on co-operation. That there have been important changes in these fields is undoubted; it seems only too likely, however, that they represent not the ending of exploitation but its continuance—and even its intensification—under new conditions, taking account of the world-wide economic changes of the past twelve years.

The Produce Marketing Boards have developed since 1947, and by 1952 were functioning fully and covered such commodities as cocoa, groundnuts, oilseeds and cotton. Produce for export is purchased by agents licensed by the Boards—and only by such agents. A high proportion is bought by agents such as the United Africa Company, the Co-operative Wholesale Society, the *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale*, etc. The price paid to the grower by the agent is fixed, so also is the price received by the agent from the Board. What precisely the Board does with the produce varies in each case, but it usually finds its way to American and British markets, often via the Ministry of Food. In the case of Nigerian oil palm produce it is delivered by the agent to one of seven bulk oil plants at the ports—all owned by the U.A.C.—for shipment; perhaps in ships of the Palm Line owned by the U.A.C., to the United Kingdom.

The Boards pay to the growers a guaranteed price for the season. The policy is to pay the grower less than the world price when this is high, so as to be able to pay more when it is low, thus stabilizing, up to a point, the income of the primary producer and shielding him from the worst effects of fluctuating world prices, from which he suffered so severely during the nineteen-thirties.

Necessarily, since the inception of the Boards in the years following the end of the second World War, years in which commodity prices have been unprecedentedly high, the producer has received well below the world price for his produce; and the Boards have accumulated substantial surpluses. In Nigeria, in 1949, for example, the producer received for palm kernels a little over half, and for low-grade palm oil a little over a third of the price received by the Board for the sale of the produce. By the end of 1951 the Cocoa Marketing Board on the Gold Coast had accumulated assets of more than £70 million. In that year the cocoa grower received £149 a ton from the Board at a time when the world price was £283 a ton.

The resulting surpluses are largely placed into stabilization funds, from which the grower may receive subsidized prices in the event of world prices declining. Small sums have been allocated by the Boards to education and research, but by June 1951 the combined reserves of the West African Boards stood at about £160 millions.

Inevitably, the accumulation of surpluses on this scale have made the Boards the target of much criticism in West Africa. Firstly, when the producers have borne the brunt of extremely low produce prices in the nineteen-thirties it is, perhaps, not easy to make them understand why they should be denied a large part of the gain when world prices are high. It can be explained, of course, that the surpluses of the Boards represent payment deferred, since they will all be available, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of West African farming. Even when this has been explained, however, the suspicion remains that, in the interest of the United Kingdom Balance of Payments, the Boards have sometimes received less than they might from the United Kingdom purchaser.

Such beliefs are not confined to nationalist circles. The *Report of a Survey of Problems in the Mechanization of Native Agriculture in Typical African Colonies*, published by the Colonial Office in 1950, makes the point that: 'At the present time neither the prices of goods imported into Colonial territories nor the prices fixed for exports of groundnuts, palm kernels, cotton and some other colonial agricultural products are fully representative of both supply and demand conditions. For instance, the shortage of fats within the United Kingdom is not fully reflected in the c.i.f. prices paid for groundnuts. . . .'

The bare possibility that the pricing policies pursued by the Boards may reflect interests other than those within the countries concerned, is bound to give rise to pressure to ensure that representation on the Boards is satisfactory from the point of view of West Africans. Such pressure is naturally strongest in the Gold Coast, but any form of self-government will be seriously incomplete until national West African governments control the marketing of their produce at every stage including, of course, the price paid to producers and—so far as possible under prevailing market conditions—the price received by the Board from purchasers, Government or private, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

The main claim made on behalf of the Boards, however, is that they have radically changed the conditions of produce marketing so as to give the African farmer a guaranteed market and a stable price, and, consequently, a stable income. Any repetition of the disastrous price movements of the nineteen-thirties, while not impossible, is at least made much less likely and, so long as the stabilization funds now being accumulated hold out, the farmer can be cushioned, to a certain extent and for a certain time, against the effects of falling world demand and prices. If such claims as these were justified it would, perhaps, be true to say that an important break had been made with the past; and that some of the worst effects of the 'colonial' status of the West African economy had been, in part, mitigated. The gravest doubts exist as to whether these claims can be justified, in the light of the actual functioning of the Boards.

Whatever else may have happened, the operations of the Boards do not appear to have led to a greater stability of income for the Gold Coast cocoa farmers. P. T. Bauer has shown (*West Africa*, June 21, 1951) that between the seasons 1947-48 and 1950-51 the incomes received by the farmers fluctuated not less than, but *more than* the world price of cocoa.

MONEY INCOMES OF COCOA PRODUCERS. GOLD COAST AND NIGERIA

I	2	3	4	5
Season	£ million	Potential per cent of 1947-48	£ million	Actual per cent of 1947-48
1947-48	52.9	100	19.9	100
1950-51 (est.)	79.5	150	45.0	226

Column 2 shows the total income that would have been received by the farmers had the Boards never existed. Column 4 shows the incomes actually received by the farmers—very much smaller, of course, than they would have been had the Boards bought their cocoa at the world price. But, as a comparison of column 3 with column 5 will show, the fluctuation over the three-year period in the incomes actually received is more than twice as great as the corresponding fluctuation in the world price. During the season 1947-48 the incomes of the farmers were held down with an iron hand, and the surplus earned by the Boards in Nigeria and the Gold Coast

was substantial. As these surpluses grew, so, correspondingly, did the pressure from the farmers to obtain higher prices from the Boards. The result of this was that the gap between the price paid to the farmers and the world price was somewhat narrowed.

The whole result of the series of operations was substantially to *de-stabilize* the incomes of the cocoa growers. No one can tell for certain the principles, if there are any, which determine the price policy of the Marketing Boards. They aim to accumulate stabilization funds, though no one knows what size such funds should attain. They appear to respond to pressure, though no one can predict to which pressures they will respond or to what extent. They seem, so far as one can say from their brief history, to be at least as likely to de-stabilize as to stabilize the incomes of the farmers from whom they buy.

It should be remembered, however, that the goods *bought* by the farmers are not subject to price stabilization, so that the terms of trade may continue to move against the primary producer when world price movements are changing sharply in his favour. It would seem that this is not only possible but that it has actually occurred for a substantial part of the post-war period. Bauer says, in the article which includes the above table: 'Producers have to buy consumer goods at uncontrolled prices while they have to sell their products at artificially low prices with a reduction in their standard of living. This has been carried to such lengths that the terms of trade of important sections of producers have actually deteriorated since the mid-1930's, or only improved slightly.' He goes on: 'It seems that compared to the average of the three completed calendar years 1935-37 the terms of trade of the groundnut producer measured in terms of textiles have deteriorated: in 1950 the Kano price of groundnuts was about treble that of 1935-37 while the "duty paid" landed cost of textiles had increased well over three times. The terms of trade of the producers of other staples seem to be approximately unchanged or to have improved somewhat. At a time when there has been a world-wide improvement in the terms of trade of primary producers, West African producers have been largely deprived of the benefits, with adverse effects on their standard of living and on their long-term competitive position.'

Fuller details indicating changes in the terms of trade are provided in a subsequent issue of *West Africa* (December 1951).

INDICES OF PRICES PAID TO PRODUCERS. 1939-40-100

	Cocoa, Gold Coast	Groundnuts, Nigeria	Palm Kernels, Nigeria	Cotton Cloth Price Index (c.i.f.)
1939-40	100	100	100	100
1947-48	584	284	319	408
1948-49	945	342	400	412
1949-50	665	380	495	383
1950-51	1,020	380	495	383
1951-52	1,170	587	610	443

This is not, of course, a complete picture of what has been happening to the terms of trade. But in the absence of cost of living statistics, it is an indication—although it probably underestimates the rise in the cost of living. The price of locally grown foods, for instance, had most probably risen by more than the c.i.f. cost of cotton cloth—in 1951 they were in some cases more than five times as dear as in 1939.

At any rate, such indications, for what they are worth, show some considerable improvement in the terms of trade for cocoa growers, though it is very small indeed in view of the more than tenfold increase in cocoa prices since 1938. In the case of groundnuts, the terms of trade were worse for the grower than pre-war until the 1951-52 season, when they were slightly better; and in the case of palm kernels they were worse than pre-war until 1949-50. And in the case of both commodities, the improvement in the terms of trade by 1952 was negligible in relation to the world-wide rise in commodity prices.

The price policy of the Marketing Boards is defended on the grounds that inflation would be caused by placing large amounts of money in the hands of West African farmers when there would be little in the way of consumers' goods for them to buy. The danger of inflation for these reasons seems real enough, but the shortage of consumers' goods may be attributed to the fact that before the resources of the manufacturing countries had recovered from the effects of the second World War they had begun to be diverted in preparation for a third. So that either the sort of consumers' goods normally bought in West Africa have been in short supply, the ships

to carry them have not been available, or priority has been given to dollar and other hard currency export markets. The conclusion seems hard to escape that the Marketing Boards have willy-nilly served as the mechanism for shifting part of the cost of war preparations on to the West African farmers of cocoa, palm products and groundnuts.

Indeed, Bauer himself comes reluctantly to the conclusion that 'the price policies of the Boards do, of course, bring about just this reduction in the demand for imports both of consumer goods and of capital goods. They bring the results which would be brought about by deliberate exploitation, and thus they give plausibility to the view that an exploitative policy is in fact pursued.'

When world prices fall, the primary producer suffers heavily through the deterioration in his terms of trade. When they rise, he is not allowed to enjoy the full benefits, because the rise is linked with international rearmament, which means that the capital goods and consumer goods he might buy with his money (if he got it) do not exist.

The policy of the Marketing Boards is not, in itself, responsible for this state of affairs. The Boards merely constitute the mechanism through which some of the burden of rearmament is shifted on to the backs of the West African peoples. Even without the Boards, the relative shortage of capital and consumer goods and shipping space would still exist, so that other mechanisms (probably involving some form of price inflation) would operate instead to depress the consuming power of the primary producers—as has occurred, in the absence of Marketing Boards, in Malaya.

It might be argued that, as a result of the stabilization funds accumulated by the Boards, West African farmers are at least protected against a new deterioration in the terms of trade in the event of another slump which might follow the end of the Cold War and rearmament. This would only be true, however, if manufacturing countries took no measures of output restriction to safeguard the prices of their exports. Judging from past experience, manufacturing countries are only too likely to do just this. Then the higher prices paid by the Boards to the colonial farmers would enable higher prices to be charged for consumer goods in the shops.

The Marketing Boards, in such a situation, might or might not

take steps to contract the output of primary products. But countries which depend on a few cash crops and minerals to provide a large part of the national income are poorly situated to conduct such a struggle, against countries whose level of development is higher and whose economic structures are, in consequence, more variegated, with a much wider range of industries and occupations. It is not, therefore, the Marketing Boards or the absence of Marketing Boards, rising or falling prices, but the 'colonial' character of the economy of West Africa which causes and perpetuates the poverty of its peoples.

West Africa has, of course, contributed directly to the economy of the sterling area through building up, almost continuously since the war, large dollar surpluses to be spent by other parts of the sterling area. The latest figures available at the time of writing show the following results over a three-year period.

COLONIAL TRANSACTIONS WITH THE DOLLAR AREA*
ESTIMATED PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS

<i>West Africa</i>	1948	1949	1950
Payments for Imports (f.o.b.)	25	25	20 (provisional)
Receipts for Exports	125	95	100 (provisional)

* *The Colonial Territories*, 1950-51, p. 52.

Something like 250 million dollars, then, were contributed to the sterling area reserves by West Africa over this period. After the Far East (Singapore, Malaya and Hongkong), West Africa is the largest dollar earner in the British Empire.

During 1950 the surplus of dollar earnings over dollar spendings by all the colonial territories amounted to 430 million dollars. That is to say, at the current rate of exchange, the British colonies earned more in dollars in one year alone than the total amount allocated in grants to the colonial territories *over a ten-year period* under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act which, it was announced in 1945, was to inaugurate a new era in colonial relations and the ending of exploitation.

The dollar surpluses and the Marketing Board surpluses do not, however, tell the full story. Dollars earned by sterling area countries in excess of their dollar spending and spent by—for example—the United Kingdom, are changed into sterling balances which con-

stitute sterling *debts* owed by the United Kingdom to other sterling area countries. West Africa's sterling balances grew, in 1950, by a total of £55 millions. By the end of June 1951 these balances amounted in total to £320 millions, of which the reserves of the Marketing Boards accounted for £160 millions while about £70 millions consisted of Currency Board reserves. (Sums in sterling, held by West African governments as backing for their local currencies.)

These sterling balances represent the exports from West Africa which have not been paid for in corresponding imports. Whether by accident or by design these huge balances (about £10 per West African head) amount to a forced loan levied by the United Kingdom to meet its economic requirements.

The reserves of the Marketing Boards can, it is true, be withdrawn by these Boards whenever they so decide; however, these Boards are not under the control of the West African people (though the situation may shortly change in the Gold Coast). The balances are in inconvertible sterling and the commodities most urgently needed in West Africa in exchange for the exports it has supplied are mostly not available in the sterling area, owing to the diversion of resources brought about by the arms drive. A self-governing dominion, in control of its own foreign trade, can, if it wishes, make dollar purchases equivalent to its dollar sales. It can also bring effective pressure on the government of the United Kingdom to take steps to reduce the sterling balances. A colony is clearly less well situated in this, as in other respects. It is therefore more likely to have its economic needs, however urgent they may be, subordinated to the exigencies of interests outside its territory. The economic impetus behind the growing nationalism of the West Coast is thus not hard to explain.

The statement is often made that Britain's economic relations with her colonies are very different today from pre-war, and the statement is largely true, though in a sense other than that usually intended. The Government of the United Kingdom was satisfied, before the war, to administer the colonies so as to safeguard private capital investments and private trading interests. What has changed is that, while the older economic relationship is preserved, a new system of exploitation has been superimposed in which the State

itself, through the mechanism of the Marketing Boards and the sterling area, takes a hand in the profitable game of milking the colonies. Colonial policy is usually a reflection of internal economics and politics; developments in the direction of state capitalism in Britain have been duly reflected in the 'new phase' of colonial development.

State capitalism develops, among other things, a distinctive vocabulary, in which the words 'planning' and 'development' feature prominently. Funds allocated to the colonial territories under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, amounted to £120 millions over a ten-year period—less than 4s. a head a year. Lest this sum should prove inadequate, a further £20 millions was granted in 1950, the whole sum to be spent over the period 1946–56.

The additional £20 millions would not, of course, compensate for the decline in *real* terms, through a rapidly rising price level, of the sums originally voted. It might even be considered ungenerous, in the face of the hundreds of millions extracted *each year* from the colonies by way of trading profits, profits on investments, interest on loans to colonial governments, dollar earnings and the forced loans discussed above. Nevertheless, times were hard: 'in the economic circumstances of the United Kingdom £20 million was the maximum provision which His Majesty's Government felt able to make; but they appreciated that this sum represented only a small portion of the financial assistance which Colonial Governments would need in order to implement their more important projects of development during the period in question.' It was therefore especially important to spend the money carefully and with discretion so that the additional funds would not be assigned to particular territories, but would be spent in accordance with priorities within the colonial territories as a whole. (*The Colonial Territories*, 1950–51, pp. 97–98.) So that it is impossible to say exactly how much will have been 'granted' to British West African territories by the end of the ten-year period. By the end of 1950, however, the sums allocated to British West African territories amounted to about £30 millions for the entire period, of which about a third had been actually received. Compared with West African sterling balances amounting to £320 millions, the gift was not over-generous.

Colonial Development and Welfare

The Colonial Development and Welfare Act, providing originally for a total of £120 millions to be provided by the United Kingdom (mostly in the form of grants, but in a few cases loaned), proposed that about double that sum should be provided by the colonial governments themselves from local revenues and loans. Each colony was also required to submit a Ten-Year Development Plan for utilizing the resources that were to be made available.

The Plan submitted by the Nigerian Government was subjected to scrutiny by the Select Committee on Estimates, which, in its Fifth Report (Session 1947-48), made the criticism that a series of individual projects, unrelated to any overall plan of development, could not by its nature, however valuable the individual projects might be, affect appreciably the level of economic life. Nigeria's Ten-Year Plan proposed to spend a total of £55 millions—£23 millions from funds provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, £15 millions from the revenue of the colony and £17 millions from loans. Summarizing the conclusions of the Committee, the Report says: 'The point of the criticism is that if the Ten-Year Plan were carried out overnight the improvement in the conditions of the mass of Nigerians would be barely perceptible.' What is true of Nigeria is true, also, of other parts of West Africa—that a series of piecemeal projects on a limited scale can make little or no difference to general living standards.

So far as Nigeria is concerned, the situation has not, as yet at any rate, been appreciably changed since the formation, in 1949, of the three Regional Production Development Boards. 'The Production Boards (Western, Eastern and Northern) which have strong Nigerian representation, have wide powers; they draw up schemes for the expenditure of grants made them by the Marketing Boards and put them into operation. . . .' The purpose of these Boards is to further 'schemes for the development of the producing industries concerned and for the benefit and prosperity of the producers and the areas of production.' (Colonial Reports: *Nigeria*, 1950.)

It is too soon to say, as yet, how the various schemes, which include grants for the mechanical cultivation of rice in the North, the erection of additional Pioneer Oil Mills in the East, for processing palm fruit, and some proposals for a river dam and possible electri-

fication projects at some indefinite date in the West will effect the rate of economic development in Nigeria; but there is an almost complete lack, up to now, of projects for industrialization, and in relation to the vast reserves of the Marketing Boards, the sums allocated for development are negligible.

The fact must be faced that projects for industrializing backward areas are not 'economic,' for the most part, because of the low buying power of the population, and the fact that, of the purchasing power that is available, a very large part is spent on the purchase of imported merchandise (mainly textiles) with which it would be hard for local industries, at least for a long time, to compete. That is why most of the capital invested in colonial territories has been for the purpose of developing crops and minerals for export.

It follows that only a large-scale programme of economic development, with a balanced allocation of resources to cover agriculture, communications and the development of manufacturing industry, is likely to succeed in raising living standards to any appreciable extent. There is, unfortunately, no indication that any of the existing plans or projects is likely to produce such results.

The Overseas Resources Development Act of 1947, like the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945, was launched with a fanfare of trumpets as an example of the 'new' approach to colonial development, and a proof that the bad old days were gone for ever. Under it there were set up the Overseas Food Corporation and the Colonial Development Corporation, each with the power of financing, through loans, approved projects for colonial development. Some of the projects are, considered individually, admirable. Especially promising is the plan to develop 1,300 square miles in the Niger District of northern Nigeria through funds loaned by the Colonial Development Corporation. The area is to be cleared by hand over a period of seven years. Ten villages are to be settled in the area with eighty families in each; each individual settler is to cultivate thirty-six acres and cultivation is to be mechanized and aided by a training farm and an engineering training school. The settlement is to concentrate on the production of cereals, oilseeds, grass lays and cattle.

A fairly realistic picture, however, of what the total effect of the Colonial Development Corporation's activities is likely to be

was painted in the first of its annual reports, issued for the year ending December 31, 1949. Again, the trouble arises from limitations in the conception of planning—a number of individual enterprises, many admirable in themselves but in no way integrated into an overall development plan. (Cf. the Select Committee on Estimates' Report on the Nigerian Development Plan.)

For this reason the Report is constrained to point out that the high cost of essential services has considerably impeded development. The first enterprise started in an area has to bear the total cost of roads, railways and incidental amenities. 'The calculation of costs such as these has led the Corporation to reject proposals for certain schemes in undeveloped territories, which, on the basis of normal overhead charges, would have had every chance of success. Collectively a number of enterprises could carry the costs involved, as they do in developed areas, but until a method is found of relieving the first enterprise in a new area of the whole cost of the services, which will afterwards, in most cases, be enjoyed by others as well, there will be a tendency for all kinds of undertakings to select sites in the more developed rather than in the less developed parts of the Colonial Empire, and particularly to select sites near existing roads and railways instead of in the more remote districts where development may be more desired.'

In fact, the existing unevenness of economic development in the colonies will be perpetuated. It may even be accentuated. For the Report goes on to contrast existing with past conditions and says: 'In the past, of course, enterprises had to create their own amenities and basic services, including roads, but these enterprises were able to proceed at their own pace, at a time when the costs of the capital works involved were not only less in relation to expected profits, but also the standards (i.e. of health and social welfare amenities, H.C.) required were lower. Since the Colonial Development Corporation must repay loans, and its operations must be financially sound, in many respects the Corporation's policy must be influenced by the same considerations which govern private enterprise.' It is reasonable, therefore, to expect the same results as habitually follow from private enterprise under colonial conditions. The new deal looks very like the old deal writ large.

The second annual report of the Colonial Development Cor-

poration (1950) returns to this theme when it says: 'Nearly all new enterprises in the colonies, including the Corporation's schemes, are heavily capitalized compared with those of earlier establishment; and many of them cannot become productive for years. The risks are obvious; the reluctance of private enterprise understandable' (p. 4). This explains why, of the £31 millions which had been sanctioned for capital expenditure on the Corporation's fifty schemes by the end of 1950 (of which one-third had been actually spent), factories accounted for barely 10 per cent of the total.

Plans for colonial development enunciated up to now do not give the impression that a serious attempt is to be made to raise the national income of the colonial territories in the only way in which that can bring tangible benefits to the people—by raising the productivity of labour throughout the whole economy (not here and there at spots selected with a view to dollar savings); and by ensuring that a greater share of the wealth remains in the countries of its origin.

On the contrary, as Professor Arthur Lewis concludes (*Financial Times*, January 16, 1952): 'In 1932, the Colonies were required to adopt imperial preference. But this was as nothing compared to what has happened since 1945. For many colonies must now sell their produce to Britain at prices below the world price, or pay an ever-increasing sum into the Bank of England, because Britain will not deliver goods in return for what she receives. Britain talks of colonial development, but on the contrary, it is African and Malayan peasants who are putting capital into Britain.'

Furthermore, we can reasonably predict, Britain is unlikely to put scarce capital equipment into colonies, in Africa or elsewhere, while priorities remain, as at present, the arms programme and the maintenance of export markets outside the sterling area. The Colonial Development Corporation's Report just quoted opens its second section with the words: 'As a result of the Korean war, rearmament and stock-piling, the price of many colonial products rose steeply: so did the capital costs of development. Of Corporation schemes, the few already in production have benefited; the immediate prospects of some others have improved; the majority have suffered from rising costs and delayed deliveries. Capital budgets have had to be reviewed; many have been found inadequate.'

Heavier capital costs increase depreciation and amortization charges; that means heavier production costs and smaller profit margins.' This situation discourages new investments in any project not promising large and relatively quick returns.

The central dilemma facing Britain in the field of colonial development is precisely this: how to 'develop' the colonies so that they can contribute more towards overcoming the United Kingdom's deficit in her foreign trade—*without* incurring the expenditure of scarce capital resources so as actually to *increase* that deficit, at least for some considerable time.

This insoluble problem creates a somewhat frantic atmosphere in which 'get-rich-quick' schemes are adopted—or rather clutched at—and ambitious plans embarked on without anything like adequate preliminary investigation.

The 1950 Report of the Colonial Development Corporation (pp. 16–17) contains an obituary of the Gambia Poultry Farm project, extracts from which may be quoted without comment. 'Early in 1948 the Chairman met the manager of a successful poultry farm in the Bahamas: found him willing to do a similar job for the Corporation. . . . The Board were convinced by the manager and the report'—the report, that is, of the Bahamas Manager and 'a member of headquarters staff' who had been sent to Gambia to investigate. The project had been agreed in principle on March 18, 1948; between that date and May 20, 1948, when the plan received formal approval, all the preliminary investigation was carried out (in a total of sixty-three days) and the report prepared. As a result: '(i) There were faults of planning, the consequences of which are now very plain; (ii) in the original estimates land clearance costs were to be set off by revenue from the sale of timber from the site; in the event this revenue was negligible; land clearance costs were unrelieved; (iii) a fundamental of the scheme was the growing of enough feeding-stuffs to support a poultry flock of the size planned—no trials were made to discover the potentialities of the soil and the proper methods of treatment; (iv) mechanical land clearance damaged the soil, which is of low inherent fertility; cropping in two successive seasons reduced much of the cleared area to little better than sand; it would take several years fallow, and skilful husbandry, to recover even its original fertility.'

There is a good deal more along similar lines, including the absence of facilities for segregating and isolating diseased birds, so that more than 30,000 died in an outbreak of fowl typhoid; there was also the breakdown of the refrigeration plant, so that 70,000 lb. of poultry which had been slaughtered had to be destroyed; the suspension of further slaughterings revealed insufficient food stocks to cope with the birds which remained alive.

There is a moral to this melancholy tale. The total amounts allocated for colonial development are not generous nor even adequate. Amounts allocated to *individual* projects, however, are frequently very large—the Gambia Poultry Farm cost nearly £1 million: but the schemes are hastily concocted. In colonial development, particularly in Africa under existing conditions, it is fatal to economize either on money or time. Colonial development cannot be achieved 'on the cheap' or 'on the quick.'

Agricultural Progress

If existing plans for economic development are inadequate, or worse, because they perpetuate the existing pattern of relationships between the colonial and metropolitan territories, it will be worth considering what type of development is needed in order to raise living standards and to solve outstanding economic problems.

The prerequisites for such improvement are in the first instance political. Only governments which can stimulate and mobilize the energy of the peoples of West Africa can begin seriously to eliminate their poverty. Such governments must, of necessity, be elected by and responsible to their own peoples, not appointed and controlled by colonial governors responsible to the Colonial Office.

It is neither possible nor desirable to legislate for future independent governments in West Africa; what may be more to the point is a consideration of the principles of economic development that could be followed, and a discussion of the role that Britain could play in fostering such development within a new relationship of equality and co-operation.

Since the economies of West Africa are overwhelmingly agricultural the first steps must be the raising of the productivity of labour in agriculture. 'It is part of our tradition,' wrote Professor Arthur Lewis (*Attitude to Africa*, 1951), 'that while we think nothing

of putting £25 million into a plantation scheme, we shrink with horror from the thought of putting up £25 million for peasant farm improvements in Nigeria, though it is by no means clear that the latter would not be more productive.'

Plantations hardly exist in British West Africa outside the Cameroons; nor could they be introduced on any scale without land alienation. Collective farming is, save in rare cases, a matter of the remote future, though there are various ways in which farmers can be helped to co-operate. Individual peasant farming, however, will remain the basis of the economy for a long while, and the productivity of peasant farms is low today because, apart from other considerations, the implements used are extremely primitive. Steel forks and spades in place of wooden digging sticks would, in themselves, considerably raise output. Instruction in soil conservation, crop rotation and the use of fertilizers appropriate to local soils would do even more.

What is needed here, however, is the diffusion of improved techniques over a wide area rather than the development, here and there, of heavily capitalized undertakings to produce more export crops. Professor Lewis estimates that the first need is for one agricultural officer to every thousand farmers. Such officers would not be highly trained agricultural specialists but men with a knowledge of local soils and climate who had received one or two years' training in an agricultural training centre.

Mechanization of agriculture cannot be applied indiscriminately in Africa without risking further soil erosion. An immense amount of human labour would, however, be saved fairly quickly by the introduction of comparatively simple machinery. It is not unusual, under present conditions, for two or three hours' labour to be spent per family in fetching water, and another two or three hours for the preparation of food—to say nothing of the carrying and selling of the produce.

'Much of the labour now spent in fetching water,' says the *Report of a Survey of Problems in the Mechanization of Native Agriculture in Typical African Colonies* (1950), 'could be saved by the use of machinery to provide many more bore-holes, wells and dams. . . . The use of well-designed grain mills could also result in worthwhile savings of some of the time and effort spent in pounding

grains—now about two or three hours daily in each of millions of households' (p. 3). There is also ample scope for the use of machinery in making permanent and dry-season roads.

Labour power released by these means could be harnessed, on a sufficiently substantial scale, for construction projects undertaken without expensive imported capital equipment. One of the factors most impeding development in West Africa is the poor state of communications. Such modern roads as have been built have linked the production centres with the ports. Communications between villages and market centres in the interior have been largely neglected, so that the production of local foodstuffs for the local market has been held back. Here, as in so many other aspects of development, a choice must often be made between policies which stimulate economic life *within* a territory and policies which facilitate the extraction of minerals and cash crops from it. Emphasis is likely to be on the latter when a country is ruled from abroad; it can be on the former when national governments pledged to give priority to the farmer and worker, rather than to the overseas investor, have replaced existing colonial administrations.

There is considerable scope for co-operative development in West African agriculture. A report made to the Fabian Colonial Bureau in 1945, *Co-operation in the Colonies*, lists (pp. 156–58) a number of ways in which co-operation can begin, within a short time, to enrich peasant farmers. Many of these measures are directly applicable to West African conditions.

Among them are: stock breeding (e.g. in northern Nigeria and other areas which become suitable for stock-raising after being disinfested of tsetse fly)—sires provided for crossing with local breeds; milk recording—to weed out unprofitable cows; use of improved seed; provision of seedlings and fruit trees—co-operative nurseries, or co-operative supply societies to handle the products of Government nurseries; control of pests—co-operative provision of insecticides, fungicides, sprayers, etc.; purchase and distribution of and advice on suitable fertilizers; processing machinery—the African product of peasant farms often finds difficulty in competing with the products of (West Indian and Belgian Congo, etc.) plantations, because of bad processing. Co-operative dairy plants, oil mills, cocoa fermentaries, cotton gins, etc., can eradicate this liability; drainage

and irrigation—co-operative organization of the initial labour and use of equipment; the subsequent upkeep and allocation of water in irrigation schemes; control of soil erosion, contour ploughing, planting of wind breaks and soil-holding plants, drainage arrangements, none of which can be carried out effectively by individual effort; food preservation—including canning and refrigeration.

In general, it is premature to speak about possibilities of large-scale mechanization of West African farming. There are, nevertheless, areas where tractors can immediately do good. Particularly is this the case in land newly opened up by clearance, drainage or irrigation, on which new settlements are being made. The report on agricultural mechanization in Africa, already quoted, considered (p. 7) that (1) in areas of good soil, with moderate densities of human population, simple services such as tractor ploughing could be provided by special contracting units, on hire to the individual farmer; while (2) in sparsely populated areas, the grouping of such of the lands of individual farmers as are to be mechanically cultivated, so as to facilitate use of machinery while retaining the advantages of family farming, offers considerable possibilities.

The main emphasis, for a long time ahead, must necessarily be on raising standards of cultivation through the use of relatively simple tools. 'One example of the adoption of new tools was seen at Genieri, Gambia, where natives have made crude pitchforks after seeing imported ones. Improvement of existing tools through better design and the use of more suitable steels would be possible in some areas.' (*Mechanization of Agriculture Report*, p. 23 n.) This report points out, in a generalization unfortunately applicable throughout West Africa, that 'most farm people do their field work before 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. on empty stomachs, and it is reported that a great majority of them have one or more debilitating diseases' (p. 14).

Raising the standard of nutrition of farmers will, in itself, make an important contribution to raising labour productivity and so enable further improvements in nutrition to occur.

Agricultural development will never, by itself, solve the problem of colonial poverty. Industrialization is required to increase the variety of occupations, raise the productivity of labour, provide an enlarged domestic market, and lessen dependence on imports.

Industrial Progress

The idea that it is in some sense economic for a backward country to 'specialize' almost exclusively in agriculture, paying for its manufactured requirements which are imported by exporting its agricultural and mineral surplus dies hard, but it is dying. A United Nations Report on *Measures for the Economic Development of Under-Developed Countries* (May 1951) points out some fallacies in the assumption that it always 'pays' to buy manufactures from abroad if they are cheap enough.

'First, it is not always relevant to compare the money cost of producing a commodity at home with the amount of money that could be obtained by producing an export product with the same quantity of resources. For example, the imported product may be replaced by using labour which would otherwise remain unemployed' (p. 56). There is plenty of evidence of 'under-employment' of labour in West African farms, labour that, were it diverted to manufacture, would result in a net increase in the national wealth.

This Report goes on to point out, secondly, that industries at first 'uneconomic' often become 'economic' when they have had time to find their feet. 'This "infant industry" case has been recognized for well over a century' (p. 57).

Thirdly, the prices of export crops are liable to fluctuate widely, introducing such an element of instability into the economy that has become dependent on them as to inhibit economic development. Nor is it enough to introduce greater diversity into the production of primary products, since 'most primary commodities fluctuate together even though they do not fluctuate in the same degree; hence, a country which exports several primary commodities is only a shade more secure than a country that exports a smaller range' (p. 57). To diminish instability from this source, the development of manufactures is essential. This is especially so in the case of Nigeria, where domestic exports constitute about a third, in value, of the total national output (*Mining, Commerce and Finance in Nigeria*, ed. M. Perham), and the Gold Coast and Gambia, where comparable conditions obtain. In such cases the instability of export prices acts as a powerful barrier to industrialization by giving rise to acute instability in the internal market.

The development of manufacturing industry must be planned as

a whole. It is useless to investigate, as so often in the past, whether it would be 'economic' to establish a new factory in a colony, find that it would not, and abandon the project—setting up the factory in England instead.

As the U.N. Report already quoted points out: 'To test the profitability of manufacturing simply by starting one new factory will give the wrong answer, since, where one might fail, fifty might nevertheless succeed if properly integrated so as to form a new industrial network. The costs and advantages of industrialization must always be assessed both in the small and in the large' (p. 58).

In fact, the same project may be 'economic' in one context—a context of expanding communications, urban populations, auxiliary industries—and uneconomic when considered in isolation. That is why the existing Development Plans (including the Plan for the Gold Coast which, apart from cement, does not provide for the setting up of new processing plants), examining individual projects with limited funds, do not propose to change the colonial character of the economies they are considering. The conclusion reached in *Mining, Commerce and Finance in Nigeria* (p. 268) is unfortunately still valid: 'The assistance which is to be given under the new Colonial Development and Welfare Act will be very valuable, but it will certainly be entirely inadequate to meet the manifold needs of a great territory with twenty million inhabitants.' (N.B.—Population almost certainly nearer 30 million.)

Industrialization can most usefully start with the home-processing of primary products. Palm products are a good example.

Palm fruits produce two kinds of oil. Palm oil is extracted from the fleshy pericarp of the fruit. Palm kernel oil is obtained by crushing the hard kernel after extraction from the fruit. There are already a number of palm oil mills in Nigeria, though there is room for many more. But the palm kernels are exported solid and the oil extracted usually in Europe. There is no technical reason for this. The Belgian Congo has become a major exporter of palm kernel oil since the 1930's (100 tons in 1932, 18,000 tons in 1948): Nigeria could do the same, while the crushed palm kernel could provide sorely needed cattle food for the under-nourished cattle of northern Nigeria. One obstacle to the development of this industry in Nigeria is the export duty of £2 a ton: no revenue has ever been collected. 'It is

therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that the duty has been retained as a safeguard against the setting up of crushing machinery in Nigeria.' (*The Processing of Colonial Raw Materials. A Study in Location*, by Charlotte Leubuscher, D.Phil. Colonial Office, 1951, p. 47).

Similar considerations apply to the processing of groundnuts. While China, Indonesia and India have exported large quantities of groundnut oil, no African country except Senegal has ever done so up to now.

The case of Senegal is interesting, since the development of this industry in Senegal was deliberately held back by France (through the medium of import restrictions and export duties) in the interests of the metropolitan crushing industry, until the second World War. (See Leubuscher, *op. cit.*, p. 41.) Through its war-time expansion, however, Senegal has now become the largest exporter of groundnut oil in the world. It also has soap factories attached to its oil mills, so that it is also an exporter of soap. As in the case of palm kernel oil and cake, and many other commodities, the utilization of by-products enables the development of one industry to foster that of another. In the case of groundnut and of oil palm kernels there would be a substantial saving in shipping space through exporting oil in place of kernels. Such development would also provide a basis for the development of a further industry—the local manufacture of oil drums for the export trade.

Up to now, however, the processing of palm kernels and groundnuts has taken place overseas; it is in the hands of foreign firms, among which Unilever holds a prominent position.

This firm 'controls not only the great majority of oil, margarine and soap factories in Europe, and a considerable number overseas, but has also acquired decisive interests in the production and buying organization of oilseeds, and in numerous other manufacturing undertakings in many parts of the world' (Leubuscher, *op. cit.*, p. 50).

It is claimed, of course, that proximity to markets for cattle food dictates the location of seed-crushing in Europe rather than in Africa. For example, a number of factories have been set up in Denmark for feeding Danish cattle and producing butter for export. This would seem, however, a strong argument for setting up a crushing industry in northern Nigeria which produces the groundnuts, has

herds of cattle, and whose people would certainly improve in health if they consumed more fats. Yet oil production has been deliberately restricted in northern Nigeria, in the interests of the maximum export of groundnuts!

There are, certainly, 'economic' arguments against the setting up of new industries in West Africa, provided by the poverty of its people and the consequent lack of an internal market. Industrial development, however, can lead to the raising of living standards, and so give rise to conditions favourable to further industrial development and a further raising of living standards. Charlotte Leubuscher indicates one very important reason for the present location of processing plants outside Africa: 'As is well known, the outstanding fact in this connection is the dominating position attained by the Unilever concern. The decision where seeds should be crushed depends therefore to a high degree on the internal dispositions of that concern. No doubt, the fact that very considerable capital has been invested in European seed-crushing plant will carry some weight when the concern has to make decisions about the future location of these industries.'

Similar conditions apply to the processing of timber in Nigeria. Here the United Africa Company (a subsidiary of Unilever) operates a saw-mill and plywood factory at Sapele. Here, too, the lack of an internal market has acted as a deterrent to the further development of manufacturing, so that in the Gold Coast only 12 per cent and in Nigeria only 14 per cent of all timber exported was in the form of lumber. Other exporters of hardwood, such as the U.S.A., Finland and Scandinavia, export lumber. Only the lack of an internal demand prevents Nigeria and the Gold Coast from doing the same. '... Conversion in the producing countries means an economy of 50-60 per cent in the weight of the shipped timber and correspondingly lower freight charges. Furthermore, it makes possible a far greater utilization of the timber extracted from the forest by retaining for the local market wood below export standard. . . . The consequent taking of more wood out of the forest also lowers the over-head costs of felling and extraction and thus reduces the price at which timber can be offered both locally and overseas' (p. 144).

We have touched so far on the possibilities of developing, in

West Africa, the processing of products which are at present exported. The main emphasis in any programme of industrial development, however, should undoubtedly be on the building up of industries to satisfy the growing home demand that would result from rising standards of life. Prominent among these should be the textile and clothing industries, and factories for the manufacture of building materials and furniture, using largely home-produced raw materials. Nor is there any law of nature which lays it down that heavy industries must be confined to Western Europe and North America, as the industrialization of Soviet Central Asia amply demonstrates. Traditional estimates about the rate at which economic development can take place need to be revised. The speed with which the Huai River project in China has developed has impressed all observers. Stretches of water a great deal longer than the Suez Canal have been cut in a fraction of the time, and often with the most primitive equipment. What could be done with the water resources of the Niger and the Benue has never even been assessed. There are, as we have already seen, immense reserves of human energy at present being wasted unproductively, which, once mobilized by effective and popular leadership, could within a comparatively short period change the face of West Africa.

Africa's coal reserves, though unknown, are believed to be poor in quantity and quality. On the other hand, the continent 'has been estimated to contain about 40 per cent of the world's water-power resources.' (U.N. *Review of Economic Conditions in Africa*, p. 108.) Sierra Leone now produces (entirely for export) over one million tons of iron ore annually. A private company has undertaken the development of the Bomi Hills deposits in Liberia with a view to early exports of almost one million tons of high-grade ore annually. The Shell D'Arcy Company recently announced that it had 'good hopes that petroleum deposits do exist' in eastern Nigeria. If the hydro-electric potentialities of Africa were to be developed they could, in association with the iron ore and other mineral resources, provide the basis for heavy industrial development.

True enough, the water-power resources of the continent are not evenly distributed: two thirds of the total lie in the Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa. With the removal of European control, however, and a new emphasis on planned development

that could follow, planning could transcend existing boundaries. It is by no means fantastic to imagine heavy industrial development on the basis of co-operation between the Congo, and what are now French Equatorial and British West Africa. An indispensable prerequisite, however, would be the abandonment of the idea that these areas can only develop as the agrarian appendages of Western European or American industrial economies.

Finance and Investment

The United Nations Department of Economic Affairs produced, in 1949, a Report on *Methods of Financing Economic Development in Under-Developed Countries* which endorsed a conclusion, previously reached by the Food and Agricultural Organization, and implied by much of the discussion in this chapter, that: 'initial development must attain a certain minimum speed or it will not become self-generating and cumulative. This is due partly to the fact that investments often require complementary investments in other fields in order to arrive at full fruition and also to the possibility that smaller scale improvements may be absorbed in increased population rather than higher standards of living' (p. 7).

This report goes on to calculate the rate which such investment would have to assume so as to break through the economic stagnation in which these areas are languishing, and so raise living standards and national incomes appreciably within a reasonable period. This particular calculation is contained in the F.A.O. Memorandum included in the Report. The point is again made that: 'Development of an under-developed country is not merely an optional process that can be cut back or deferred at will. . . . A rocket or moonship must attain a definitely established "speed of release" before it can escape from the earth's gravitational field.'

Applied to British West Africa, the calculation works out at a rate of capital investment of the order of £100 millions a year, over a ten-year period, by the end of which, with investment projects rationally distributed over industry, agriculture, communications and essential services, the national income could be increased by 50 per cent. Naturally, 'to attain the minimum rate of development needed in under-developed countries under the

criteria set forth here, it appears that substantially larger total investments and substantially more international investment would be required than those provided for in most present national plans and estimates' (p. 62).

It so happens, however, that international investment along traditional lines is unlikely to take place on anything like this scale, for it is at present at a very low level, and 'there is general recognition that, whatever may be the underlying economic causes of the current stagnation of international investment, a significant increase in the flow of private investments to under-developed countries would require substantially greater incentives than now exist' (p. 23).

Such 'incentives,' so far as internationally supplied capital is concerned, usually require what is termed 'political stability,' which is interpreted by many colonial nationalists as 'political subordination.' Furthermore, capital from this source would not normally produce investments of the type required, since, as has also been implied elsewhere in this chapter, 'normally, foreign capital tends to avoid investment in manufacturing, at least as long as the manufacturing industries are working for the domestic market' (p. 26). Foreign capital, in fact, including American capital, will be attracted by mineral deposits (such as bauxite) and the prospects of groundnuts, rather than by the type of integrated, planned investment that will regularly and rapidly cause the real wealth of the receiving country to rise.

Nevertheless, a programme of capital development on the required scale is not economically utopian. But it requires political conditions which will have to be fought for. If domestic resources were fully mobilized by governments possessing the support and confidence of their peoples, a third of the required sum—representing about 5 per cent of the national income—could be provided internally without intolerable economic strain.

If West Africa were to receive and *were allowed to use* the world price of her products, the remainder of the capital could be provided from this source alone. West African sterling balances (subtracting the Currency Board reserves) stood at close on £300 millions—enough to finance development on the required scale for over four years, while further reserves accumulated. More than half

of these reserves belonged to the Marketing Boards, but these Boards can and should be used as major sources of capital accumulation. National Governments in West Africa would, of course, issue and control their own currencies; Marketing Board reserves could be withdrawn from the United Kingdom and spent on capital equipment; while counterpart funds could be set up in the local currencies for distribution to farmers (to whom, in the last resort, the funds belong) as the economic situation permitted.

Finally, it is certain that, as the peoples of West Africa advance towards political and economic independence, the demand will grow here, as elsewhere, for the nationalization of the assets of foreign companies. West African governments which still try to attract foreign investors as an alternative to the mobilization of internal resources will continue to assert that they oppose such nationalization. But as the hopelessness of attempting to achieve satisfactory living standards in colonial countries by these methods becomes apparent, the demand for nationalization will grow; although—since the alternative road of advance will require radical internal reforms—it will be resisted by the conservative forces within the nationalist movements.

The other political presupposition is that the Labour Movement in Britain is prepared to re-cast its colonial policy and really develop it along new lines, as the colonial peoples were led to believe it had done in 1945. It requires that a government in Britain, based on the Labour Movement, should cease wasting enormous resources unproductively on armaments and begin to produce, instead, the equipment with which to pay off the accumulated sterling balances of the colonies. Such a government, co-operating with West African governments, for the first time as independents and equals, would produce, within a comparatively short period, a transformation in the formerly 'colonial' scene, and, from the rising wealth of Africa, could obtain increased quantities of the foodstuffs and raw materials it required for its own planned economy.

The necessary integration of economic development in Britain and her former colonies would require, in both, the development of genuinely planned economies which, in the case of Britain, could only be Socialist, while in Africa they would be under popular control—under the control, that is, of workers, farmers, manu-

facturers and traders genuinely concerned to promote the development of their countries.

The precise form of such a relationship, the detailed plans for economic development, and the precise methods of raising the resources required can only be worked out in the light of circumstances obtaining at the time. What has been attempted in this chapter is the demonstration that *present policies* do not represent a break with the 'colonial' past and will not, therefore, produce the desired results; that alternative policies are *possible*, based on different principles and with a different economic (and political) orientation; and, finally, that the Labour Movement needs to re-think its colonial policy as an indispensable part of its plans for a Socialist Britain within a prosperous world.

CHAPTER V

The Conditions of Technical Progress

MY aim is simply to define some of the conditions that will make possible a technical revolution in West Africa. Until more is known about the resources of the region, no scientist could say what science might do to transform it. He can only suggest useful lines of research and point to some of the obvious difficulties, snares and hazards. Science and technology will go to work in West Africa and develop all its productive forces; but they must be a science and technology that are thoroughly acclimatized to an African environment. They must be a native growth, even if Europeans play a part in them. The economic laws that govern African society today have also to be taken into consideration; they need to be reduced to scientific terms if we are to understand how the transformation is to be carried through. It would be unpardonable to assume that British or American or Russian methods can be imported wholesale into the West Coast, and that they will then automatically work the miracle.

To the early men who lived by foraging and hunting the tropics offered some advantages. The climate is hot; where there is water, it is abundant; and nature is frequently prolific in edible plants and game. It was only later, when men had learned the elements of husbandry, or had acquired them through intercourse with other peoples, that the real difficulties of the environment were felt. In the great forest belts nature is over-prolific and almost unmanageable; changes in weather are often violent and destructive; and the soil is liable to alterations in structure and fertility that make cultivation a precarious business. Worst of all, pests and disease organisms that affect men themselves as well as their crops and stock multiply and spread as readily as does the vegetation. The more ordered the husbandry, the more easily may the growing crops fall prey to sudden infections.

Any human beings that found a habitation in the tropics would have had to face the same conditions. As far as we can see they

would have had to deal with them in much the same way as did the primitive African cultivators. The West African peoples painfully worked out their own solutions; and for some thousands of years they showed as much ingenuity in doing so as their contemporaries in the more temperate regions of the earth. Their methods differed, because their conditions differed. What we know as the West African farmer of today is the product of many centuries of effort, failure and hard-won stability under these adverse conditions of soil, climate and vegetation.

African Man

It is as well to remember that anatomists and psychologists have as yet found only superficial differences in structure and temperament between whites and blacks. It is not even certain that the black skin has any relation to the climate or the sun's rays. For all we know, the differing colours of the African and the European may only be matters of chance variation. They are clearly members of the same species; and the differences between them are trivial.

If there have been distinctive lines of development in what is vaguely called the 'temperament' of the two peoples, then we might guess that West African conditions have favoured over many generations the dominance of a kind of 'shock-absorbing' attitude to life. This is, of course, mere surmise. But the African has shown a very high capacity for survival and continued reproduction under adverse conditions. One evidence for this is the manner in which he has survived his long ordeal on the American continent. Slavery was the testing-ground of a temperament that has been slowly matured under the rigorous selective influences at work on the West Coast.

Be that as it may, we know that the men who settled in West Africa were faced with an agrarian problem quite unlike the problems of the temperate regions. They solved it perhaps as effectively as did their primitive contemporaries in Europe and the Middle East. When the forebears of the modern Africans reached the West Coast, they were no doubt already in many cases cultivators of the soil. But beyond that primitive stage of husbandry, progress was bound to be very difficult for them. In such a climate and on such soils casual and happy-go-lucky experiments seem wellnigh

impossible. They might lead (and one may suppose they often have led) to the kind of farming disasters that no community cares to face a second time. Nature in these regions is too catastrophic for this trial-and-error method of farming. These facts appear to me to account sufficiently for what is believed to be the sluggish and conservative characteristic of West African agriculture. The European improved his farming methods and extended his area of cultivation through the Middle Ages mainly because he did not have to pay too dearly for making a wrong guess. He was working in an equable climate and on fairly stable and reliable soils. He had often to work hard, of course, to nurse poor forest soils into a state of productivity; but so long as he worked hard, he was tolerably sure of his harvest. Hard work alone would not have saved the African from disaster; he had to learn the limits imposed upon him by the forces of nature; and in a sense his simple methods of cultivation have been as effective as those of many eighteenth- or nineteenth-century European farmers.

Man in the Tropics

We might make a few conjectures about life in the tropics. There is little evidence that the black man is less or more adaptable than the white to various conditions of heat and humidity. It happens that the West African lives in the tropics: and his habits have naturally become acclimatized to his environment. He may, as I suggested earlier, have gradually acquired a kind of temperamental adaptation. But there is one characteristic of the tropics that should be recognized. They do not usually allow of moderation in the output of physical energy. A man has to be either lethargic and easy-going or exert himself strenuously and to a purpose.

That Africans are capable of vast exertions we know both from the records of labour output and from many incidents in their own history. Yet European observers have suggested that the African is inherently lazy or lethargic. Now, it is necessary here to remember that Africans live and move in an atmosphere of infection and infestation that is quite beyond the experience of most Europeans. I shall consider later what this means. But I want first to emphasize the peculiar quality of life in the tropics; the tropics seem to insist that men shall be either very active or very contemplative. I am not

suggesting that the average African is incapable of moderate work; by demonstration he obviously is. But for some generations he has not had the social incentive needed to make him fully active and experimental. The tropics give him no alternative but a humorous or melancholy resignation.

It seems that West Africans are now moving into a phase of purposeful re-ordering of their affairs. If they are, the speed at which they move may at times be rather surprising, though one can scarcely predict by what varied paths the movement will travel towards new economic and social forms.

Disease and its Influence

Disease in the tropics is a more serious factor. It affects both man and his food crops. It would not be too much to say that both of them live in close partnership with disease organisms, and that they together form a common mode of existence. This, however, is a deliberately exaggerated statement; it must not be taken to mean that they are all of them, men and crops alike without exception, diseased. What it does mean is that in much of West Africa we do not know what an 'undiseased' or healthy crop of the ordinary food plants would look like; and glancing over any sample of a hundred men we could scarcely guess what that hundred would look like and how they would behave if all the debilitating social diseases of the region had been held in check.

It is the debilitating endemic infections and infestations that count in the tropics, not so much the occasional epidemics of the kind with which we are familiar. I am not here considering the killing diseases of men and stock such as that carried by the tsetse fly or the ravages of such plant diseases as the swollen shoot of cocoa. I am thinking of such human complaints as malaria, tuberculosis, venereal disease and worm infestation that sap the stamina of far larger numbers than they kill. The effect they have upon the will to work and upon the urge to break through the inertia of old habits is immeasurable. Why try new ways where the old still serve? Why work harder when the family has enough for its survival?

The conditions of past centuries are not easy to surmise. Malaria and worm infestation must have been there with man. But some diseases have been imported; and certainly syphilis and possibly

tuberculosis are the gifts of the white man to African society; they have become endemic and have assumed forms that are peculiarly weakening. All these diseases affect infants and young children; and the death rates among them must always have been high. It would, in fact, have been taken for granted that a third to a half of all children born were fated to die before their third year; it is still taken for granted in many societies that the mortality will be very large. This child mortality acted in the past as the most effective check on population growth; but it did more than that. While it killed many small children who might in theory have recovered it also probably eliminated all who were least tolerant of the infection or infestation to which they were subjected; and it left maturing men and women who were more or less adapted to the conditions. Now, however, we have a population in which a larger proportion have survived with organic complaints of one kind or another that affect the liver, the kidneys or the intestines.

I will not say that before the coming of the Arab and the white man all was well; for life was hard and death lurked always round the corner. But some accommodation may have been found between men and their natural environment so that a tolerable level of human vigour was attained at the cost of high mortality. The population was far more thinly dispersed than now, except in the urban communities; and men would have learned to avoid the worst areas. New forms of infection had not yet crept in and undergone modification. As for mortality among young children it was probably not much more serious than it was in many parts of medieval Europe, though the frequent lack of milk herds of any kind must have had an influence upon it. It is not much worse today than it was in our own Tudor times. But the causes of it differ to some extent; and the problem of infection and infestation in West Africa is far less manageable than it was for our own nineteenth century.

The outcome of all this is that governments in West Africa will find themselves faced with what seems a curious dilemma. It is a dilemma common to many of the tropical regions of the world, though it may not often be admitted as frankly as I shall admit it here. We must have a higher level of productivity per man as well as per acre if the region is to meet the food needs of its growing population and to have the necessary margin of export crops. But it

is gravely to be doubted whether African communities in their present state of health are capable of raising production per man; at any rate, the complex of diseases from which they suffer is one of the main retarding factors. In that case the endemic diseases of the region must be checked. Since, however, the checks will operate on the whole community, they are bound to result in a higher survival rate among children and so to accelerate the growth of the population.

One may say with equal frankness that the dilemma (if it be a dilemma) can only be resolved in one way. We have to take the risk. Such barriers to productivity as are created by the prevalence of various infections must be removed. It will take time, of course; but in my view we have no alternative. Meanwhile, it is necessary to release all the reserves of energy and purpose of which the people are capable. I have suggested that these reserves are large. But they will only find full release along the channels that appeal to the people themselves. The channels will be compounded of many national and social yearnings; and they may at times assume unexpected and rather disconcerting forms. But no student of history will suppose that there is any other remedy.

Traditional African Farming

West Africa is still a complex of farming and pastoral economies, mostly farming. This has already been implied; and much of what I have to say will be concerned with the agrarian question. I must first revert to what I said earlier about the characteristics of primitive or native African farming.

What the primitive African learned, when undisturbed on his land for sufficient time, about the possibilities and the hazards of tropical farming was about as useful as what the medieval peasant learned about farming in temperate regions. That is to say, it was a good theoretical guide to practice up to a certain level of productivity. The job was to avoid the hazards; and so long as one avoided them, it did not matter how far one ascribed them to magic or the intervention of malignant spirits or the failure to assuage an otherwise well-intentioned deity. The *practical* measures a man took were much the same.

The African came to know the poor soils and the poisoned soils.

He came to know the number of years over which a cleared holding could be expected to yield reliable crops; and he then allowed it to go back to bush or forest growth. He came to adopt methods of husbandry that would more or less circumvent the depredations of pests. Where the plantation farming of crops or trees rendered them vulnerable to plant infections, he tended to spread the cultivation of them over wider areas or to grow them in the wild. He retained the mass of his forests unimpaired, partly because he could do no other; and in that way he saved his soil from erosion. The primitive farming economy was sanctified by a kind of veneration for the earth; and it was perpetuated by social customs that made private rights in land almost unthinkable. The tribe, and the chief as the tribe's embodiment, were the tribal trustees for the tribal land; the land was managed through the slowly gathered and traditional wisdom of the chiefs and elders of the tribe.

One must be very careful not to present an idealized picture. But the fact remains that *under tropical conditions* it worked fairly well; and we may doubt whether at that level of technology any other system would have worked at all. The tropics have their own way with men. Before communities of cultivators began to drift into the West Coast and establish themselves there, a more or less stable equilibrium would have been reached between climate, soil and vegetation. Slow changes in soil structure, in the course of rivers and in the character of the vegetation were always at work; but they were gradual and punctuated only at long intervals of time by catastrophic shifts in equilibrium. Intruding upon so inhospitable a world, the primitive cultivators had only one prospect of success; and that was by merging themselves into the natural equilibrium and becoming part of it. They modified it to some extent in the process; they could scarcely help doing so. But they learned painfully the tricks of nature and they observed them. Fortunately for them they learned their farming in the tropics; they were not tempted to try out on tropical soils and climates methods of husbandry that are suited only to temperate and equable conditions.

By the time the Islamic cultures made their impact upon them, the peoples of West Africa had attained, it seems, a certain level of technique and organization. The Islamic contact was by no means unbeneficial. It introduced new food plants into the region; and

these were slowly assimilated into the patterns of native farming. But there is little evidence that for many centuries Islam imposed any drastic change in farming technique or in the forms of land tenure. The native farming economy was sufficiently advanced to assimilate in its own time what it needed. Only in the later period have some of the less useful customs of Islamic tenure and inheritance taken root in parts of the region.

In whatever ways Islam has influenced the culture and thought of West Africa, it is important to realize that the farming systems of the region were probably mature enough to absorb the shock of new ideas. Agriculture was an authentic native growth. It had to be, because no experience gained under more temperate conditions can be of any value on tropical soils by comparison with even the confused experience of men who have actually worked on those soils for generations.

Science and Overseas Markets

With the modern European came agricultural science; and it was here that the trouble started. Not that the science has been bad science. In the hands of an agricultural officer who knew his business it has done good. But in many instances it has been temperate farming science applied without due caution and trial to tropical conditions. One cannot emphasize too strongly that, while there are, of course, some recognizable similarities between them, temperate farming is *not* tropical farming. Indeed, farming practice and farming theory learned on European soils cannot safely be exported to any other part of the world. Most of the erosion of the newly settled continents has been due to the belief held by the immigrant European farmer that the new semi-arid grasslands were 'easy money.' Because there has been no white settlement on the West Coast, the trouble has not gone too far. What trouble there is arises from the mistaken advice frequently offered to the African and from a few ill-considered and ambitious schemes; and it arises above all from the fact that this has become a white traders' country.

The two factors are interrelated because trading has meant trading in export crops such as cocoa and palm produce. While the African consumes some of his own produce, it interests him as an export crop in a way that differs from his interest in what he

traditionally grows to barter or sell in a local market; and it is of considerable interest to the European authorities for a number of reasons. So it has been on the export crops that the agricultural officer has tended to concentrate his attention; and even then little harm might have been done had not the development of this export trade in crops changed the attitude of many Africans towards their soil. Under the incentive of a money and trading economy of this kind the customs of land tenure and land usage are gradually changing. They are changing in the wrong direction for the health of African agriculture. In Europe and maybe in much of Asia it would not matter so much; in tropical Africa it does matter.

Before I deal further with the subject of farming and the course it should take, I want to say a few words about the trading economy of West Africa and what it implies. It is a very important aspect of the region, not least through its effect upon farming economy. For, though farming practices must change and should have been changing long ago, it is scientifically necessary that they should change according to their own inherent laws of change under tropical conditions.

West Africa as a Trading Economy

For how many centuries the West African farming economy has supported town and city life only the spade of the archaeologist will reveal. What these towns and cities were about seems fairly clear. From time to time they have been seats of government and centres of religion; and there is evidence that they often contained large communities of craftsmen. But mainly they were meeting-points of trade. Trade with the north and the east was their purpose; and those who controlled them were not only paramount chiefs but lords of bazaars who thrived on the exchange of goods and maybe on the licensing of merchants and the protection of trade routes. They were not merchant adventurers; they had no need to be; the caravans came to them. They must, however, have acquired a good eye for business.

These chiefs and their dependent courts and families exerted upon the farming economy of their lands no influence comparable with the function that was performed by the rulers and priesthoods of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. African agriculture had not

developed in relation to the flooding of great rivers; and the functions of rulers were consequently never bound up with the control of irrigation waters and the adjustment of land rights. They may have drawn tribute from subjected peoples; but until recent times no ruling caste survived long enough in the region to impose its character upon the economy and habits of the people. The towns were not quite parasitic because there must have been a considerable amount of trading between them and the countryside, and contact with the civilizations of the north and east had its effect upon remoter villages. But the towns had no internal economic function; and as a result a trading way of life grew up amid a tropical farming system.

Much of West Africa is still to a remarkable extent a trading economy. To its own native ability for trafficking and bargaining it has assimilated some of the habits of the Moslem trader. The paths by which the old markets and their overlords degenerated into centres of slave traffic is tolerably plain. We do not know how far back this traffic in human commodities can be traced; it may have gone on in a casual way for centuries. But the town rulers were always seeking control over the sources of goods the merchants needed; and when it was black slaves they needed, rulers with useful armies naturally met the demand. West Africa separated itself at last into the raiders and the raided; and among some of the tribes the roles became utterly confused. Slaves were bought and sold as shrewdly as any other forms of commodity.

Traffic of this kind owed its persistence to the fact that labour was needed on the plantations of a largely unpeopled continent and to the speed with which some of the Arab peoples worked through their slaves. It would have continued had not the economic realism and the conscience of a few European countries brought it to a close. As far as West Africa was concerned, it was the logical outcome of a trading way of life that had no true economic function beyond that of trade. Many of the paramount chiefs who fostered the traffic may have retained some religious significance among their peoples and may have acted as courts of appeal; the sowing and harvesting of crops had little to do with them.

The traditional quality of the farming is due in part to the set resistance to change that would have been shown by the cultivators. But the towns and their ruling groups were no less religiously sure

that this was the only way to grow food crops. Many of the cultivators themselves lived in or on the fringes of the towns, as in some instances they do today. As far as the soil was concerned, it was a single society. The town rulers had no function of controlling water resources and probably little enough in the making of weather magic. They rarely traded in such commodities as grain or wool, and so had no temptation to become landlords and enclose land. They did not establish plantations or cotton fields. Had they done any of these things the towns would have had an influence on the farming economy, as they have had elsewhere in the world. But they could not; and they had no need to try.

Towns, however, have to be fed; and this meant internal trading. In a country with a primitive transport system the growth of town communities demands the carrying of surplus food from the countryside and a deal of trafficking and bartering. What we are seeing today is the continued growth of towns, often into very populous trading and administrative centres but without any corresponding developments of a modern transport system. Many of the towns are now larger than were any of our own cities outside London in the early eighteenth century. The result could have been foreseen. England of the early eighteenth century was a land of higglers and hucksters, drovers and market women and small dealers in cloth and fish and vegetables. If our towns had grown to the size they were in the mid-nineteenth century without the development of railways, canals and roads, we should have had a complex of petty trading rather similar to the conditions of West Africa. It is petty trading that has come to involve a mass of customs, rights and vested interests; and there is no clear distinction in these interests between the peasants and the traders. They are intimately associated in families and societies.

The genius of many of the African peoples for trading and bargaining is undoubted; and the reason for it, as I have suggested, goes back for a few centuries. The culmination of the process comes with the growing of export crops and the dependence of the whole region on its trade in groundnuts, cocoa and palm products.

It has been necessary to make clear the meaning and the long persistence of this trading outlook in West Africa because it may hamper technical progress. The energies that have flowed into petty

trading, merchandising and litigation must be canalized into production, farming co-operation and the establishment of a flourishing internal market. The whole economy may otherwise run to seed; and if the land too becomes a subject for trading and pledging like any other commodity, serious damage could result. The process has not gone too far; but it has reached the critical crossroads.

Social Factors

The technical revolution on the West Coast will grow out of the ways in which men and women have chosen to organize themselves. So considerable and yet so fluid seems their capacity for self-organization that it could promote or hamper reforms very effectively. In the ports and some of the towns where Africans are concerned with the marketing of imported goods or with some intermediate stages in the bulking of native produce they could be formidable. In the inland system of petty trading and bartering the traders are often members of families that spend most of their time cultivating the soil or collecting produce. Many of them are in fact both growers and traffickers.

Now, while it is impossible to foresee the exact course that will be taken by the technical revolution, certain guiding principles can be laid down. I mean that under tropical conditions some policies will be found practicable and some will not. To whatever false starts and mistaken methods an African administration is from time to time committed it is bound ultimately to find the right solution.

I would first point out again one of the weaknesses of West African farming; it has not been steadily influenced, except in the case of export crops, by the growth of a town civilization. In all the classical economies of the world, urban influence has been prominent. Agrarian progress is a product of the subtle intercourse between farming and the growth of urban crafts and industries. When rural economies such as those of the West Coast are interwoven, not with their own urban life but with the remote markets and industries of Europe and America, the whole process is distorted. The urban demand for food is not directed to improving the production of the normal food crops and stock of the country but merely towards the more extensive cultivation of a few tropical products. If such a product as cocoa were part of the usual diet of

the people they too might benefit from a development in cocoa cultivation; but it is not. Groundnuts and palm products are or should be consumed in the region; but they have come to represent in many areas almost the sole basis of a cash income. On the other hand, what the countryman and his family buy with their meagre income is not the produce of relatively simple and indigenous crafts and industries but the imported and refined products of a sophisticated industry overseas.

It is important that the scientific and technological influences brought to bear upon the peasant shall be those of his own country. For one thing he is no longer likely to be impressed by what the European tells him unless it affects his cash income for export crops. For another thing, I must insist that tropical agriculture has its own laws of development. If it is a question (as indeed it is) of improving the cultivation or the rearing of millet, yams, maize, groundnuts, oil palms, cassava, rice, poultry and pigs, then it will have in the main to be done by men who are familiar with the traditional African methods and know the feel of African soil on their fingers. There is always a risk that hustling a peasantry into untried methods, however effective they may be, will lead to a decline in production; and that is a hazard that cannot lightly be faced in a country on subsistence level. But more to be guarded against is the risk that a market demand for various foods will lead to over-cropping and a decline in yields. Such a decline in yields might only be temporary, but it would be very troublesome while it lasted. The men who want to get science into tropical farming must plant their feet on the farms and not on streets and wharfs.

African Self-Organization

It is tolerably clear that the national consciousness of the African has already reached a stage at which no reforms that the British or the French or indeed anyone but the Africans themselves propose, will have much chance of permanent success. This may be unfortunate; but it must be faced.

We are in a period when no one but an African can perhaps know what is passing in the ironical, many-sided thoughts of Africans. A few years back the European anthropologist may have been able on the West Coast to glean some information about customs

and beliefs; at all events he had as good a chance of doing so as in any other region of the world. Nowadays the African often has a very shrewd idea of what the anthropologist would like him to say; and the information is in consequence becoming less and less authentic. The African's power of self-organization is manifesting itself partly in political movements of one kind and another, and partly in his increasing facility for keeping the European guessing.

Where African men or women want for some reason to combine, collective action seems to follow by a kind of natural law. They must, however, *want* to combine for the purpose they have in view; and it is becoming obvious that many of the forms of combination suggested by Europeans are being quietly and effectively ignored. It does not mean that Africans are incapable of running organizations of the kind; it merely means that they want to keep the European guessing.

In all the fluid mass of men's clubs, women's societies, trade unions, voluntary working gangs, enlarged family groups, craft guilds, trading associations and the rest, it is not easy to distinguish a pattern. Some are survivals from a remote past, though their forms are changing; some are of very recent growth. Any one of them may be caught up into the current of contemporary political movements. They are, in fact, all undergoing a process of change.

It is impossible at present to tell whether the behaviour of a group of villages is a sign of real economic and cultural backwardness or merely a symptom of unspoken revolt against conditions. It may very well be both. A reversion to a more primitive form of food economy or an apparent inability to acquire new techniques may be simply a half-conscious mode of resistance. The villagers may very well be able to master the new techniques as quickly as their neighbours a hundred miles away. This does not mean that the African is already technically expert, and is hiding the fact; on the contrary the leaders of African thought know very well that he is not. What it means is that we have no measure at all by which to estimate how rapidly a technical revolution might be realized in West Africa. It might take decades; but for all we know it may only take years.

I will now touch briefly upon a few of the technical problems with which the genius of the African will have to deal. There are

many aspects of industrialization, for instance, or of the protection of the health of men and crops that I shall not attempt to consider. It is preferable to take a sample of problems and show something of their interconnection.

Water Control

The water problem of any region of the world is that of making as much of the rain water as possible play some part in the growing of crops. Men need water for drinking and cleansing and stock have to be watered. But the main problem is that of using the water for crop production before it has evaporated, sunk too far into the ground or flowed back to the sea. Since the rainfall of West Africa is mostly seasonal and alternates with dry periods, little progress in farming could be contemplated without schemes for water conservation.

In the more exposed parts of the region the rate of evaporation is naturally high. The vegetation demands a considerable quantity of water; and as a result in the drier districts varieties of crops have to be carefully selected and those that are planted must not be forced into an overgrowth of leafage by too prodigal a use of fertilizers. Water is the limiting factor. Where there are streams and rivers, irrigation may often be possible. But before irrigation on any scale can be undertaken, the extreme variations in rainfall and in the flow of rivers have to be studied. The water engineer has to provide not merely for the needs of a few villages but for all communities that depend upon the water throughout its whole course.

In general it may be said that the higher upstream the water can be controlled the better the prospect both for irrigation and for distribution. The large rivers tend to swell in some seasons to tempestuous torrents and to dwindle at others to trickles. So far as an even flow can be established, constant use can be made of them. This is important not only for irrigation but for hydro-electric schemes. But wherever he plants his dams, the engineer can never rely as a guide on the figures of average rainfall, even if these are accurately known; he has always to allow a margin of safety in his designs and to prepare against unusual floods. The advantage of upstream waters and tributaries in the early development of irriga-

tion is two-fold. Not all the irrigation water will be used for the growing of the local crops; some will percolate back into the main stream. Moreover, the reservoirs and even the irrigation waters tend to raise the whole water table of the area; they thus make far more water available for cultivation than they themselves directly provide. In the next place, the many small schemes of irrigation that are here suggested could be constructed and controlled by the African villages. They need careful management, of course, if malaria is to be avoided, the soil washed clean of salt deposits and the water resources of the area fairly distributed. But in a country where new techniques have to be learned and applied by peasants, it is by all means preferable to start with modest schemes.

In the first stages the rivers will probably have to be surveyed along their courses for the siting of weirs and reservoirs. Only when the African is ensured a tolerably even flow of water will he be in a position to develop his resources. At the same time, methods will have to be contrived for the removal of sand banks that might, in the absence of the normal flooding, accumulate in the river beds. While it is reasonable to expect that hydro-electric schemes on the Niger and the Volta can be used for industrial purposes, some of the power might be released for the pumping and piping of underground water reserves.

The scientific management of the tropical forests could in theory make a quantity of water available for cultivation on the lower slopes. Though the tree cover must be preserved in large organized belts or temporary strips, a great proportion of the rain that falls on the forests is used by the dense undergrowth; and if this could be thinned out with no risk of flooding and erosion, some of the water thus saved would disperse itself over the level cultivated lands.

The great dams planned or in operation on the Volta in the Gold Coast or on the Niger in French Sudan are of another order. The Volta scheme contemplates the damming of the river about seventy miles from the sea, at a point where it passes through a gorge. When the undertaking is complete, the river will open into a lake with an area of 2,000 square miles. The main purpose is that of supplying power for the production of aluminium; but the project includes a plan for the irrigation of some 200,000 acres.

The French scheme on the inland delta of the Niger consists of a

large dam; the total length of the structure with its flanking embankments is a mile and a quarter. So far more than 50,000 acres have been irrigated, though it is expected ultimately to have a system of over two million acres under irrigation. It is probable that to ensure a sufficient water flow in the reaches downstream another barrage may have to be constructed below the one that is already in operation; and unless the grazing lands frequented by the nomad cattle-keepers are to suffer from a shortage of the seasonal flood water, on which they have relied, measures will have to be taken. This, however, is only part of the trouble of a region at present arbitrarily divided into separate administrations. The essential characteristic of all water is that it moves; and the water resources of a geographical region have to be surveyed and controlled in their entirety, since they recognize no frontiers but those of their own making.

Forest Farming

Most of the tropical soils of West Africa are inherently poor soils. Exposure to strong sunlight produces in them a rapid oxidation of organic matter; and in the rainy season the reserves of phosphates, nitrates and other plant nutrients are too easily washed out of the soil or pass beyond the reach of most plant roots. The forest growth is an adaptation to these harsh conditions. It canopies the soil and it serves to break the violence of the rain. But the secret of its survival is that it keeps the limited supply of plant nutrients in constant circulation, recovering them from the soil through its roots and returning them to the soil in its fall of leaves. The felling and burning of an acre or so of forest releases for the moment a considerable quantity of plant nutrients and for a year or two yields may be fairly high. But after that little more can be expected. The soil has no accumulated depth of fertility; and the rains will have done their work. The elements of fertility will have been washed out or can only be recovered by deep-rooting tree growth.

If the land is left fallow it produces a growth of bush and weeds whose roots to some extent reach the nutrient materials and the bush, as it grows, affords some cover to the soil and gives time for the slow process of rock weathering to build up here and there a small reserve of new fertility.

In a way, then, the forest is nature's own solution. Organic

matter is oxidized by the heat; and if the plant nutrients thus released are not used at once for the making of fresh vegetation, they may be lost. There is some advantage in this for the farmer if he has any animal manure; for after a dressing of manure the nutrients are available in considerable quantities; they are not released slowly as they would be in most temperate soils. The resulting yields may be good for a year or so. But there is little building up of reserve fertility.

Apart from the task of maintaining this recurrent cycle of fertility the farmers of the West Coast will have to keep large protective forest belts. Nothing can at present save them from this necessity. Though soil erosion has not reached any serious proportions, it is still at work; it always must be at work where men leave bare fallows and cut into the forest that has served to break the violent run off of rain water. As the population increases, the areas of cultivated land are extending deeper into the forests; and if a complete transition is to be made from the primitive farming systems to a modern agriculture, there are at least four measures of reform that must be simultaneously adopted.

In the first place, it is absurd to export from soils that are so notoriously deficient in phosphates, large quantities of vegetable products that are themselves rich in plant nutrients. The annual drain of products is considerable; and the phosphates they contain only go ultimately to fertilize the soils of the importing countries of Western Europe and North America. The trouble lies not with the extracted oil of palm fruits and groundnuts but with the palm kernels and residues that contain the nutrients and are mainly used for cattle cake. These residual substances will have to be returned to the African soils, preferably by way of the guts of native farm animals.

This brings us, secondly, to the problem of livestock husbandry and of mixed farming in the forest regions. It is a problem complicated, of course, by tsetse fly infestation. But it will have to be solved. If the natural cycle of fertility is partly destroyed by the removal of forest cover, then livestock will offer one of the more effective ways of keeping the plant nutrients above ground. The nutrients return to the soil not in the fall of leaves but in the form of manure. Animal manure seems more effective on tropical soils than the composting

of plant waste; and so far as a new cycle can be established through the constant manuring of the soil by farm stock a fresh balance may be achieved. But there is a further problem that will have to be solved. However hardy the livestock are as scavengers of herbage, their fodder must be assured; and that means some additional growth of fodder crops. Moreover, stock would have to be kept in considerable numbers if they are to replace the forest growth in the cycle; and that means that the revolution in husbandry will have to be conceived and carried through on the grand scale.

To attain a more advanced form of equilibrium under tropical conditions, men will have to study the use of all manure and vegetable waste. How it is to be preserved and processed for application to the soil we do not yet know. Methods that save the maximum amount of plant nutrients and at the same time avoid the risk of disease will have to be devised. The rule that you must put back into the soil what you take out of it applies, of course, to all grazing and cultivated land. But it is most important for tropical soils. Lastly, the system of fallowing, best suited to these conditions, has yet to be worked out; a growth of trees with long tap-roots would be preferable, if fast-growing varieties can be found, both for the recovery of the nutrient materials and for firewood; possibly it will become the practice to lay out copses of such trees here and there over the cultivated areas.

Until fairly recently men have been little more than intruders into the natural balance of soil and vegetation represented by the great monsoon forests. They fitted themselves slowly into this balance and did not seriously disturb it. When they become the dominant factor in the partnership between forest and man, a new and efficient balance has to be established. It has, moreover, to be established as expeditiously as possible if the soil is not to be subjected to disastrous erosion. I have tried to indicate some of the features of the transition. It is mainly a matter of the control of fertility; and it cannot be solved merely by applying annual dressings of phosphates and nitrates (useful as these could be in their place) because the supply problem would be of such large proportions. The main purpose of applying occasional dressings of nitrates would be that of encouraging production of a lush growth, the nutrient materials of which must then be kept in circulation.

Cattle Country

The cattle of West Africa are mainly in the hands of the nomadic pastoral peoples of the north, who range with their herds beyond the areas of tsetse fly infestation. It has been reckoned, for instance, that about 90 per cent of the cattle of Nigeria are held in this way. The movements go on across frontiers, following the seasonal pasturage and water supplies. The common breed is hardy, but with a very low yield of milk and apparently a low birth rate. Yet the demand for meat in the south is considerable; and in the north the habit of drinking sour milk is already widespread.

Before these pastoral peoples can be converted into settled cattle breeders, at least three changes are needed. The attraction of a settled market for their meat and milk must enhance in their eyes the value of a cash income. They must be assured of reliable water and fodder in the dry seasons of the year. They must see good reason to breed for high yields of meat and milk.

In all respects the second should take precedence. Though the breed can no doubt be vastly improved by the introduction of new strains for crossing with the native stock, the geneticist can scarcely act unless he knows the capacity of a well-fed native beast. Most of the cattle are poorly fed over several months; and the herdsmen themselves show little inclination to select the best bulls. Over parts of the region deep bore-holes will ensure a fair flow of water; and this could be pumped or fed by gravity into the grazing areas on which settlement is planned. But for the provision of reserves of fodder the cattle rearing of the region would have to be integrated into the mixed farming system; only in this way would it be possible to encourage the growing of fodder crops and the collection and storage of crop and vegetable wastes from the cultivated lands.

Much of the savannah country is better suited for pasture than for cultivation. The rainfall may often be low; and the grass cover is not, as in many temperate regions of the earth, a store of increasing fertility. Intensive cropping would lead to a decline in yields and to erosion. But if the range of the herds is to be limited, over-grazing has to be avoided; for this would lead as surely to erosion. The limiting of the herds to economic proportions, with well-bred and well-fed beasts, is a stage at present beyond the conception of the pastoralists. They do not breed for numbers quite as insistently as

do some of the pastoral tribes elsewhere in Africa; but they do value cattle-keeping as a way of life rather than as a source of income. There are, however, signs that they are here and there prepared to settle. Their habit of wandering in groups of families suggests that some kind of co-operative venture would not be impracticable; and if the grading and processing of meat were possible through the establishment of a few modern slaughter houses, an interest in the market value of their products might grow.

As it is, most of the meat that goes south moves on the hoof. The cattle may be sold several times on the way; and the losses from disease and other causes are often considerable. In the tropics, of course, the problem of the preservation of meat, milk or fish is usually the limiting factor. In the long run the authorities may have to give serious thought to milk-drying plants, fish-drying and canning.

Problem of Mechanization

The purpose of farm machinery is to save time and labour; they do not produce crops, though they may help to save the harvest in a rainy season. But unless the time and labour thus set free is devoted to tasks of husbandry, that would otherwise have been neglected, or diverted into workshops and factories, little is gained technically by mechanization. The peasant has, in short, to desire intensely to expand and improve his production before the advantage of a machine becomes obvious. The growth of an internal market for food of good quality will probably have to precede any such development of mechanization; and when it comes, it will have to be carefully adapted to the varying soils of the region.

We must bear in mind that most African cultivators have not been accustomed to use a large range of farm tools or to manage horse-drawn ploughs and reapers. The European peasant thinks in terms of mechanizing processes with which he has been on the whole familiar. For the African mechanization is simply to leap several stages in the normal course of agrarian development. Not that the African cannot manage tractors and lorries; he has indeed shown himself capable of mastering machines of any kind. But he still lacks intimacy with them; he has not been trained from childhood upwards to a mechanical way of thought. All this means that

he will not readily integrate the machines into his system of farming.

Moreover, the European has been mechanizing his farms at a time when he is beginning to acquire some effective understanding of soil chemistry, of good manuring and of scientific husbandry. He is careful on the whole not to overcrop and not to damage the soil structure. The African is threatened with mechanization just at the time when the attraction of overseas markets, the growth of a money economy and the increasing density of population are making him forget all his traditional respect for the soil; he is threatened with it before he has replaced his old inherited farming lore with even a rudimentary grasp of soil science. Farm machinery, especially in models designed for European or American conditions, could have serious consequences for African farming. The transition from primitive beliefs to the elements of tropical soil science must be made as speedily as possible; and that probably implies the need to teach elementary chemistry in all schools. The resulting conflict of ideas and practices will be felt for more than a generation; but it is the only solution.

Where machines are to be used for the clearing of bush, the work may have to be undertaken from machine stations. This task is sometimes performed communally or by hired labour; but it is not a long task, and the cropping is usually carried out by individual farmers or by family groups. Tractors and other equipment could be handled for the purpose by specialists; and it would have the advantage that the clearing could be done in accordance with a plan of forest and tree conservation. It will almost certainly be preferable to design small and easily manœuvrable tractors. Many of the holdings are likely to be restricted in size; and allowance must be made for the scattered tree cover. On the slopes much use could be made of appropriate machines for terracing, channeling and contour embankments.

In the savannah areas of West Africa there is some tolerable soil that could lend itself to mechanization. But over most of the savannahs there is risk of erosion if soil fertility is not maintained; and for that reason any extensive use of machines would have to be accompanied by an increase in mixed farming and the keeping of stock for manure. It is in these areas, however, that any extension of grain crops for the towns and of feed crops for stock seems most

likely. Some of the land is not yet heavily populated; and it offers the best chance for experiments in the consolidation of communities and the adoption of a mixed husbandry into which cattle and farm machines are cautiously integrated.

Farm mechanization is a natural sequel to the growth of a large-scale market economy and the drainage of the surplus population from the land into industries. Without these it is more or less artificial, even if it develops at all. It does not appeal to the farmer as a means of raising his cash income. Only the growth of industrial communities will provide him with a stable market and make possible the production of native implements and machines. What is needed at present is roads and railways to clear the produce from the farms and get it into distribution. Conceivably a wider supply of more varied hand tools and implements will have to precede any general use of machines; and in many areas familiarity with draught animals would be a normal stage in the progress towards mechanization.

Prospects for Co-operation

When a writer says that in such a region as West Africa it is essential that there shall be a growth of co-operative farming, he must be careful to explain what he means. The term 'co-operative farming' could be interpreted in various ways; and the conditions of any country decide in what form communal enterprises of this kind will develop. The important thing in the first instance is that peasants or cultivators should get into the habit of acting through meetings and committees. The practical undertakings on which they are jointly engaged do not greatly matter. It may be a question of common marketing or of the operations of a jointly owned processing plant or of the tilling of communal plots. Whatever it is, the habit of acting through meetings and committees has its own dynamic; it is bound to develop further.

There have been a good many co-operative schemes started in West Africa; and some of them are fairly thriving concerns. But they are dispersed over a very wide area. Most of them deal with the marketing and occasionally with the processing of export crops. Some of them are co-operatives only in prospect, contrived from above for the distribution of new varieties of seed, for the

encouragement of manuring or for the management of irrigation waters. I am inclined to think that the plan of transferring schemes of this nature to African co-operatives, though it may not always prove abortive, has in it a fundamental weakness. It is the wrong way to begin. Better a struggling co-operative, provided it is authentically African in origin, than any scheme superimposed upon the African by an external authority.

But a struggling co-operative must have the sense of administrative support and be carried forward by an ardent spirit of loyalty. The spirit of loyalty that carried the Danish co-operative farmers through their early troubles is not entirely lacking in West Africa. Yet it would not be safe to rely on this alone. The sense of administrative support is for a Government to engender; and it must be manifestly fostered by all the means the administration has at its disposal. Co-operatives must have favourable terms of marketing and transport, small loans at a low rate of interest, special opportunities for acquiring tools, fertilizers and insecticides and help in periods of strain.

Above all, they need a guarantee of good, honest book-keeping. Farming co-operation the world over depends more on good and continuous book-keeping and management than on any other single factor. If African Governments can fill at once any vacancy that occurs through the death, departure or malpractice of book-keepers and managers, they will go far to ensure a healthy development of co-operatives. But it will have to be Africans who fill the posts; and it will have to be town-bred men if none are forthcoming from the villages. What Africa needs is a generation of young men and women who are prepared to devote themselves to work of this kind.

African urban civilization has done practically nothing for agricultural reform. Progressive movements in agriculture, it must be recognized, are rarely initiated among the farming communities alone; they are a product of the intercourse between town and countryside. The process could well begin with a movement of commercially and mechanically trained young Africans back into the villages.

We have to ask what precise form of co-operation is best suited to African needs. I think it will have to depend mainly upon the

better prices and the improved conditions of marketing and transport that can be offered for high quality products. A farming co-operative is held together by the fact that its members collect, grade and store their produce in common; it is even more effectively held together where they enter into the first stages of processing and refining. Standards of grading are essential if the producers are to be persuaded to use selected seeds and to show due care in the harvesting and handling of their produce. It seems necessary for a co-operative to be organized about a processing plant of some kind and to be conscious that it is so organized. The plant may be a cotton jinnery, a cocoa fermenting station, a slaughter house, an oil-press or a simple grading and packing station. Whatever it is, it must embody the common life of the co-operative. The vested interests of the petty traders will, of course, be affected; they invariably are affected by the growth of a co-operative movement. But is there any other practical solution?

In encouraging a co-operative movement the authorities have at present the overseas market chiefly in view. But it is essential that the West Coast should develop its own internal trade in food-stuffs. It would be very unhealthy for the region if its own levels of production and consumption remained more or less stationary while highly organized co-operatives began to take charge of such export products as cocoa, groundnuts, hides, fruit and cotton. This means that increasing attention will have to be paid to the internal markets; and these seem to me to offer a very favourable field for development.

Basic Need of an Internal Market

The climatic conditions of West Africa separate the region into well-marked belts of vegetation. As with all peoples living on a subsistence level the inhabitants have never interchanged their bulk products to any large extent. There has been, however, some traffic in meat, vegetable oils, kola nuts and other regional products.

Now, it is a peculiar fact about farmers that the surest way to get them to co-operate in raising the quality of their produce is to offer them a fairly reliable export market. They find themselves competing with other producers; they are face to face with purchasing interests that have an exacting standard of quality; and some element of

national pride seems to play its part. Moreover, if the export market is significant in a nation's economy, the Government will do what it can through publications, lecture courses and agricultural colleges to instil sound methods into the farming community. It is useless, by the way, to suggest that the African peasant has shown little evidence of caring greatly for the quality of his cocoa or his palm products; he still lacks the element of national pride.

What I am concerned with here is the fact that the distinctive climatic conditions and racial types of West Africa make all the people rather 'foreign' to one another. The whole region is a complex of differing ways of life and of diversified natural products. It is well adapted to become a kind of federation of peoples; but where the frontiers between them will finally establish themselves no one can say. As bulk markets develop within the region, a large proportion of the surplus foods and fibres and later no doubt manufactured goods will normally be exchanged across these frontiers. This would place African Governments in an advantageous situation to manage the internal trade of the whole region. Mutual agreements would be needed to regulate standards, prices and transport. But if some move could be made towards such agreements, they would free West Coast farming from its excessive dependence upon overseas markets.

There is no reason, of course, why tropical countries should not rely on exporting overseas their cocoa, bananas and vegetable oils. If they are well fitted to produce these foods, by all means let them exchange them for the commodities they need. They are as useful in that aspect as gold or bauxite. But we must keep a sense of proportion. The real test of an export policy is whether food is being shipped overseas at the expense of the health of the people who produce it. If too much attention is given to export crops, too little land will be devoted to the staple crops of the region.

The Levers of Technical Progress

There are two social elements on whom African administrations will have to depend; and they are the young and the women. The position is much the same in most parts of Africa and in the Middle East. The recipe for a pioneering and reforming authority is fairly simple. It is to seek out two or three of the leading women of a

village and to make firm allies of them; and it is to start residential schools for at least some of the children, preferably a day's journey or so from their villages.

In time, of course, a smouldering conflict of ideas and habits emerges. It is characteristic of a healthy administration that it never fears to release these somewhat unpredictable social forces; it takes it for granted that it can in sufficient measure direct and canalize their insurgent flow. This fact will dawn at last on African Governments. It is not likely to appeal to the European authorities; they will probably not even understand what I mean. Systems that depend on the rule of chiefs and emirs, or on the slow conversion of the French Sudan into an image of French society, are incapable of risking the release of social forces in Africa.

The women of West Africa are a formidable portent of change. There survive among them the elements of organization from primitive times. Even in the Moslem regions they possess latent powers of association that are beginning to manifest themselves. As a destructive solvent of outmoded customs and beliefs and on the powers of chiefs and emirs, they will be very effective. They have in many instances distinctive economic functions that place them in a most advantageous position for influencing local ways of life. But they are not entirely a progressive economic force. Their interests are frequently intertwined with the prevailing modes of small-scale trading and marketing; and what they will do is more unpredictable than are most of the dynamic forces in African society today. They must nevertheless be given their head. For one thing, any attempt to check them will probably be hopeless in the coming flux of affairs; and for another, where they do become attached to some form of co-operative venture in processing or marketing they will work tenaciously for it.

The minds of the young are the field in which the struggle between old and new ideas will have to run its course. In my view residential schools are essential. The emotional ties of a family will be quite strong enough to ensure a constant interplay between parents and children, even if the school is a day or two distant from the village. Besides the basic elements of education, the curriculum will have to concentrate upon West African history and politics, African soil science, botany and hydrology, mechanics, hygiene, crafts and

book-keeping. Further subjects would be adapted to the various regional conditions. The resulting conflict of old and new ideas and habits of life that is bound to be released in the villages will take many forms, some of them disconcerting for the administration. Those who are timid of adopting this course of action seem always to underestimate the cohesive qualities of African society. It can stand the shock.

It will take time of course. The staffs of even a few residential schools are not produced in a day. But this will probably be a field in which European men and women who want a job worth doing may take service under an African administration.

It is as well to add that African Governments will probably be employing for some years scientific and other experts from the European countries; they will need not only teachers but medical men, engineers, soil chemists, hydrologists and so on. The qualities demanded of these men will not make selection easy, especially as they will have to face the climate. The language problem might present difficulties. But men with the right amount of patience, humour and devotion are to be found in any country; and the net may have to be cast fairly wide over Europe. In the meantime Universities could help by setting up departments of African affairs and by familiarizing students with the conditions under which some of them may seek a career. One can hope that more than a few will realize the attraction of being among the midwives of a new civilization.

CHAPTER VI

The Challenge to Britain

'WE are confronted today with an African agrarian, economic and social revolution.' The words are those of Sir Philip Mitchell in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary at the end of 1951, when Sir Philip was Governor of Kenya. They form part of one of the most important despatches which any Colonial Governor has sent to a British Government. They recognize squarely the central problem of colonial territories throughout Africa.

'It is surely of the greatest importance,' Sir Philip continues, 'that this part of Africa [he was referring specifically to Kenya] should not be allowed to suffer, as the United Kingdom and most of Europe has suffered, by permitting this revolution to run its course, unregulated and undirected in its effects upon large populations of rural origin, whether in their primitive agricultural setting or concentrated as wage-earners in industrial centres. . . .' And he pleads for a thorough study from 'a modern point of view' of this problem as a whole.

This book has wished to make a contribution towards such a study of changing conditions and the changed policies which are required to meet these new conditions. But it is imperative to recognize that the British part in changing African territories now under colonial administration is not and cannot be a passive one. Whether we like it or not, we influence colonial territories for good or for bad.

First of all, what is Britain's real intention in this matter? Is it to end the epoch of imperialism by a genuine and deliberate attempt to ensure the equality of national status for African peoples now emerging into nationhood? Or is it merely to modify the form and appearance of imperialism, while retaining the substance? Is it, to quote more forceful words lately used by a Nigerian national leader, Obafemi Awolowo, to 'exchange political dependence for an economic stranglehold'?

Let us put it another way. As an imperial Power, we cannot

avoid responsibility for the manner in which our colonies acquire independence for the kind of men and institutions who take over from our colonial rule. What system and pattern of government do we hope to see established in our colonies, once we yield to their demands for self-government?

These are important questions. Manifestly, there is a choice. Through the apparatus of British colonial rule, Britain can promote one set or class of men in preference to another set or class of men, and one set of opinions and ideas in preference to another set of opinions and ideas. In preparing to withdraw our apparatus of colonial rule from our colonies, we can promote self-government along traditional lines or along untraditional lines. We can greatly influence the choice between systems of society.

The responsibility is obvious and it is not small. For by taking one set of decisions, we can make it necessary for these newly liberated peoples to pass through many of the trials and tribulations which unrestricted capitalism has enforced on other peoples, and on ourselves. Or we can prefer and promote the men and organizations through whom these peoples can best profit from the experience of others and can hasten their development in terms of a modern industrial society.

While we may draw some satisfaction from Britain's record in West Africa during the last few years, there is no ground for complacency. Nor will it be sensible or fair to blame shortcomings on a Colonial Service staffed mainly by men whose training has been in the old ways, whose opinions are predominantly Conservative, and whose prejudices have sometimes stood in the way of intelligent advance in the colonies. For the most part, these men work hard and work honestly: when the pace of advance slows down, or comes altogether to a stop, it is not they who are to blame, but their masters in Whitehall and Westminster.

Let me give an example of what I mean. One aspect of the situation in the Gold Coast today which gives cause for sharp criticism is the weakness and backwardness of the trade union movement in that territory. Partly the result of social conditions in the Gold Coast, this weakness and backwardness of trade unions is even more the result of a wrong and harmful attitude by the British Administration. One needs only to compare the brilliant achievements of

the African Mineworkers Union of Northern Rhodesia with the situation of the African mineworkers of the Gold Coast to see the proof of this. In 1951 the president and general secretary of the Northern Rhodesian African Mineworkers Union were able to visit Britain on the invitation of the National Union of Mineworkers of Great Britain: their union, at the same time, was admitted to the Miners International on the sponsorship of the British miners. Yet, at the very same time, on the long-established Ashanti gold-fields the African miners were actually without one single full-time trade union official. Their union was pitifully weak. Should it therefore be argued that the Northern Rhodesian Africans are more intelligent, more 'advanced,' more capable of organization than the Gold Coast Africans? Obviously not. For the Gold Coast is on the threshold of self-government, while Northern Rhodesia remains a protectorate governed from Whitehall. The truth is that the Northern Rhodesian African mineworkers were given scope to develop their capacities for industrial self-defence which the Gold Coast mineworkers have not been given.

The example is instructive and could be doubled in many fields of public policy. We can carry it a little farther. How could the Gold Coast unions be anything but weak? It is a fact, lamentable enough, that the Trades Disputes Act of 1927 remained in force in the Gold Coast throughout the Labour period of office, and remains in force today. This is not because the Gold Coast unions have been so strong that the employers and the Administration have needed a repressive instrument such as the British Tories thought they needed after the General Strike of 1926. It is because the Administration has seen no need to repeal the Act. The Act has remained in force because the Administration, by and large, is deeply imbued with dislike of, or contempt for, trade unions. Yet it would be quite beside the point to blame the Administration. We cannot reasonably expect these administrators to see in trade unions more than a convenient means of 'keeping the workers quiet'; most of them, after all, have never come within a hundred miles of participating in, or even sympathizing with, trade union activity. And some of the 'Trade Union Labour Officers' appointed from the British trade union movement within the last ten years—supposedly to foster the development of African trade unions—have shown a painfully short

memory for their own origins and have quietly, and quickly, imbibed the orthodox opinions of their colleagues.

Nor is it difficult to see why. The failure of these 'Trade Union Labour Officers'—many of them good trade unionists at home—is not simply or even mainly a personal failure. (It is partly a personal failure, as the one or two successful examples show.) They are sent out to organize trade unions on behalf of Government. But Government is not neutral in this matter. Traditionally, Government is on the side of the employers—the foreign trading companies, the foreign mining companies, and so on—and Government cannot therefore welcome a genuine trade unionism which is out to struggle against the employers. I am making no moral judgment in saying this—though there is a moral judgment to be made: I am merely stating a fact. The reason why the British are in West Africa—not to speak of other colonial areas—is primarily commercial. Contrary to the familiar Victorian slogan, the flag has followed trade—or at any rate the chances of trade. Until the second World War, and Labour's joining of the Coalition Government which fought that war, few or none of our colonial administrators had thought seriously about trade unions—except to think of ways of preventing their creation. Why should they? They were trustees of commercial advantage: they could not welcome organizations which must sooner or later bring the old regime of 'cheap labour' to an end.

But the war changed many things. Trade unions emerged. It became Government policy to encourage them. And yet Government was ill placed to do this, for Government was still on the side of the employers. Hence we saw in time that where Government was especially reactionary and most closely wedded to the interests of white men, as in Kenya, trade unions were either discouraged or simply written off as being 'beyond the grasp of primitive Africans.' We saw that where Government was still deeply influenced by Whitehall and Westminster, and where local accidents of personality and economic pattern were helpful, as in Northern Rhodesia, African trade unions became rapidly successful and strong. We saw elsewhere—and notably in the Gold Coast—that Government was caught fatally in this equivocation of loyalties: the loyalty to its primary interest, the interest of the employers, and the loyalty to orders received from London. Where this primary interest con-

flicted with the orders from London, the orders from London were in practice set aside. And so it was with trade unions.

There are important lessons in all this. Many of them have already emerged in one form or another from the foregoing chapters. But we can perhaps define them now a little more closely. In the first place, it is not enough to have good intentions. We shall not foster a strong African trade union movement, for example, merely by wanting one. We shall not get strong co-operatives in colonial areas merely by passing resolutions, even good resolutions.

Secondly, it is not enough for a Colonial Secretary, no matter how progressive, to issue orders in a general sense: if he does, he is likely to find that his orders have fallen foul of established interests which are stronger than his orders. He must particularize. He must go into details. He must estimate the forces in play, and make his orders strong enough to prevail.

Thirdly, it is unreal (and often unjust) to blame the local administrations when things go wrong, or go too slowly. Their job is to carry out policy, not to make policy: when the policy they are given is weak, or is ambiguous, or is unrealistic, they will generally refrain from carrying it out in the progressive sense of its ambiguity, and will carry it out in the reactionary sense.

But these lessons from experience since 1945 touch only the technical side of the problem of liberating our colonies from our own colonialism. There is another and much more profound lesson: and one that is infinitely harder to learn. Unless it is learnt, however, neither we in this imperial country, nor the Africans in our colonies, will go far towards that progressively expanding state of liberation which can alone realize the full wealth of our world. This lesson comes with especial force out of our experience of trade unionism in colonial territories. We saw that a Government wedded primarily to the interests of the employers—as all colonial governments are wedded, and in present circumstances necessarily wedded—cannot possibly promote a strong and independent trade union movement. Wherever, notwithstanding this, strong trade unions have emerged in colonial territories, the basic reasons will always be found to lie in the persistence of the African workers themselves, and not in the persistence of the colonial governments concerned. What applies to trade unionism, applies to everything. Colonial governments

established for the purposes of imperialism—for the purposes of promoting specifically British wealth and welfare—cannot sincerely and effectively want to work for the wealth and welfare of the Africans.

The Labour Movement early recognized this by condemning Imperialism. It was this recognition that lay behind the Movement's desire to withdraw imperial rule from India, Ceylon, Burma and other subject countries. But the lesson that we have now to meditate—and perhaps to learn—is that we cannot liberate the colonies, we cannot 'develop the backward areas,' we cannot have any sort of honest 'partnership,' so long as the economic relations between Britain and the colonies (or protectorates, or trusteeship territories) are capitalist relations. Henry Collins has shown us why. For so long as the basis for economic relations with our colonies remains capitalist, so long shall we hold firmly to every method of strengthening the Sterling Area, even when such methods mean the receipt of direct subsidies (through dollar exports) from colonial peoples much more gravely impoverished than we are. This is another way of saying that we cannot afford to liberate our colonies so long as we are wedded, through alliance in one form of warfare or another, with the greatest capitalist nation of all, with the United States of America.

But can we afford to liberate our colonies? Under the economic relations of capitalism, the answer will be no. To permit Nigeria and the Gold Coast to spend their export earnings as they like may be to deprive us of a great many dollars—of enough dollars to ruin finally our 'balance of payments.' To forgo our tin and rubber interests in Malaya may be fatal to Britain as a capitalist country allied to other capitalist countries. To advance the interests of Africans in Kenya, for instance, may be fatal to Britain so long as we conceive of our colonies as links in a strategic chain.

From a wider point of view, however, we cannot afford *not* to liberate our colonies. Just as the continuance of capitalism in Britain has meant appalling waste in human energy and human life, so imperialism (the continuance of capitalist relations between a colony-owning country and its colonies) has meant that the few have grown rich while the many have grown poor. 'The Statistical Office of the United Nations, analysing the income of seventy countries in 1949,

found an average income of some fifty-five dollars a head in South and South-East Asia, compared with 773 dollars in the United Kingdom and 1,453 dollars in the United States. It also found that the nineteen richest countries, with only 16 per cent of the population enjoy just over 66 per cent of the total income, while the fifteen poorest countries, containing just over half of the people, had to live on less than 9 per cent of the total income.' (*War on Want: Association for World Peace*, 1952, p. 9.)

Just as capitalism has divided our own society into the rich and the poor, so we see that imperialism has greatly reinforced the same contrast among the nations of the world. Not to liberate our colonies, in these circumstances, means to impoverish them still further. Not to liberate them means to make the world poorer, and the threat of world starvation greater. 'With over 1,500,000,000 people in the world suffering from hunger, the continuing rise in world population faces mankind in this present century with the certainty of "crisis by starvation." The world population, 2,200,000,000 today, is estimated to reach between 3,000,000,000 and 4,000,000,000 by the end of the century. There are two more mouths to feed every three seconds. Food supplies are not expanding anything like as quickly as world population. . . .' (*War on Want*, p. 8.)

Without rising standards of production and consumption in the colonies, much of the world will remain poor, and even very poor; without full political freedom such standards will not be achieved, without a profound change in Britain, that political freedom will continue to be denied to many of these peoples who are not yet strong enough to seize it for themselves.

These are inescapable conclusions. In the long run—and perhaps the not-so-long run—our own welfare, in these islands, becomes inseparable from the welfare of colonial territories. The more they can produce and consume, the richer the world can be—and the richer we ourselves can be. The only people who will deny this proposition are those who are still imprisoned in the old ways of thought—and who believe, even when they are ashamed to admit that they believe, that riches are inseparable from poverty, and nobody can be well fed unless somebody else is prepared to go hungry. And yet the modern sciences—and the science of socialism among them—have long exploded this belief.

These conclusions lead to another. We live in a world where a radically new relationship must come into existence between Britain and British colonies. And it is high time, therefore, that we all took serious thought on what manner of new relationship this can and should be. We live in times of crisis when old systems crumble and new systems begin. We shall do well for ourselves if in good time we can foresee what road salvation lies. This book has attempted to present some of the factual background for new policies, some of the hard-and-fast material from which a practical plan for colonial liberation can be built.

We need a practical plan. Yet we must equally be careful not to fall victim to those who are now peddling the old medicine in new bottles.

A great deal is talked about the 'development of backward areas.' 'We must embark on a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under-developed areas,' declared President Truman in 1949, introducing his now famous 'Fourth Point.' He believed, he went on, 'that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in co-operation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. 'Such new economic developments,' the President concluded, 'must be devised and controlled to benefit the peoples of the areas in which they are established. . . . The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. . . .'

It was a noble statement, and one which everyone could warmly applaud. But what exactly did it mean? The answer is important if only because the United States is the most powerful nation in the Western world and the owner of most of the available surplus capital. Not for nothing was 'Point Four' enunciated in the United States.

On the face of it, 'Point Four' means non-profit-making capital investment. 'The old imperialism . . . has no place in our plans.' It means, that is to say, the gift of capital to backward areas for nothing more than a nominal interest—since more than a nominal interest could not possibly be paid. It means that the countries which

have grown rich in the past will now open their purses for the countries which have grown, or have remained, poor; and will build schools, hospitals, communications, and so on and so forth, as well as helping these countries to modernize and industrialize *for their own advantage*. It means, in the last analysis, that this capital will be made available freely and directly to the people of these countries, and not to foreign interests or through foreign interests already established in these countries.

But what in fact has happened? Nothing like this has happened or is happening. The sums voted for 'Point Four' have been quite insignificant, adequate for no more than the payment of salaries and expenses to a few itinerant teams of experts. But other sums have been made available at the same time and for quite other purposes: curiously enough, these other sums are now being presented to us as a genuine contribution to development along the lines envisaged in 'Point Four.' Yet they are nothing of the kind.

What we are facing today, indeed, is not the 'old imperialism,' but a skilfully devised 'new imperialism'—camouflaged for the public benefit as non-profit-making philanthropy. Consider what has happened since President Truman made his 'Fourth Point' in January 1949.

A number of United States agencies have made large sums of capital available to British (and other) colonial territories. Many examples could be quoted. Here are two or three.

In January 1952, the Mutual Security Agency (which stockpiles strategic raw materials for the United States) advanced 1,640,000 dollars to a company in Tanganyika, called Uruwira Minerals, for the promotion of lead and copper mining, repayments to be paid in deliveries of lead and copper to the United States. On the face of it this looks a reasonable and even progressive measure: the United States will supply capital equipment in exchange for payment in the raw materials which this capital equipment can now produce. But look into the matter a little more deeply, and you find that Uruwira Minerals is a subsidiary of the great Central African holding corporation, Tanganyika Concessions Limited, controlled by British, United States, Belgian and other big mining interests. Now, Uruwira Minerals is not digging up lead and copper for the benefit of Africans: it is digging them up for the profit of its shareholders, none

of whom is African. To its African mineworkers and other workers, it pays a wage that is as low as the labour market will permit. The sum of these wages is all the benefit that the Africans of Tanganyika will receive from this promotion of lead and copper mining. Only by the wildest stretch of imagination could this particular loan be called 'non-profit-making development.' On the contrary, it is imperialist development of the strictly classical type: the investment of surplus capital in backward countries in order to produce raw materials for export, and to produce them by 'cheap native labour.'

And yet there is nothing out of the way about this example. It is typical of many. The Mutual Security Agency announced, at about the same time, that it had concluded arrangements for the advance of 103,000 dollars for the exploitation, development and production of asbestos in Southern Rhodesia. This money is to be repaid in deliveries to the United States of asbestos of 'satisfactory grade': and this asbestos is to be mined by European mining companies who are going to mine it for profit, and are going to pay the lowest wages they can get away with.

In July 1951, loans by the E.C.A. Agency (another United States official agency), totalling about twenty-four million dollars, for the improvement of railways in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and for the promotion of copper and cobalt mining in Northern Rhodesia, were announced by Mr. W. L. Batt, the agency head in London. These loans are to be repaid 'in the fullest extent possible' in strategic raw materials such as copper, cobalt, tungsten and chrome; and the materials, once again, are to be mined by British-American companies whose motive is profit, and nothing but profit. Where does all this differ from the 'old imperialism'—except in the direct involvement of the United States?

One could carry the argument further. The Nigerian Government recently approved the concession of lead-zinc mining rights in eastern Nigeria to an American corporation. The British lost the concession in their own colony, it seems, because they were unable to supply the necessary capital equipment (having turned over too many British factories and British workers and British resources to the needs of rearmament). But the American corporation was given the concession not under the conditions of Point Four, but under the conditions of profit-making exploitation. The only perceptible

difference in the terms of this concession, and the terms under which the older mining companies had their rights, lay in the imposition of a slightly higher rate of mineral duty. The lion's share of mining profit from Nigeria's raw materials will continue to go overseas. (This American corporation subsequently withdrew from this undertaking: but the substantial point is still valid.)

When we speak about the need for foreign capital in the development of backward areas, accordingly, we have to be careful what we mean. It all depends. Capital investment along contemporary lines means a reinforcement of imperialist profit-making at the expense of backward peoples. None of these loans I have mentioned will contribute towards the true development of the peoples of Tanganyika or Rhodesia or Nigeria—towards the kind of development which raises the material and cultural level of the native populations *as a whole*. All these loans flow into the same framework of 'white supremacy' and 'cheap native labour' which has kept these territories in their backward state through many decades of white occupation. They are all loans, that is, made within the framework of imperialism.

This major equivocation in the economic field is paralleled by another in the political field. Thomas Hodgkin discusses this with particular cogency where he describes the effects of the new Nigerian constitution on northern Nigeria.

'We must be careful,' runs the underlying thought in the minds of so many white men, even when they believe themselves most liberal towards the aspirations of Africans: 'We must be careful not to go too fast.' It is a thought that echoes nowadays from one end of the continent to the other. Many, no doubt, say this because they are genuinely under the impression that rapid advance for Africans would be bad for Africans. Others say it because they want a reason for delaying the pace of advance.

It is a thought, however, in which a genuinely liberal opinion can have no honest part. For it means, in colonial terms, one thing and one thing only. 'Not to go too fast' means discriminating against radical or revolutionary forces in favour of reactionary or static forces. It means bolstering up the past as a barrier against the future. In northern Nigeria, as Hodgkin shows, it has meant a refusal to act decisively, or to act at all, against the amirate autocracy. It means

the granting of self-government after the colonial Power has done its best to advance the reactionary over against the progressive forces.

That is why the policy of 'not going too fast'—which has nothing to do with the use of good sense and common prudence—can never be a progressive policy, but always a policy which aids those who are wedded to the past.

These few examples are enough, perhaps, to show the pitfalls in our way. Many interested people are busy at the moment arguing many interested things: and we are likely to come a cropper in colonial policy if we do not think for ourselves, and think hard.

This book is not intended in any sense as a programme. Yet it calls for a programme. Most of us know that we stand on the threshold of Africa's coming of age. We cannot go on in the old way. We do not want to go on in the old way.

For Africa has long since lost its 'mystery,' its obscurity. Here is no continent of 'fabulous mines and witches,' of 'secret knowledge and strange beliefs.' Here is a continent in which about 200,000,000 human beings live near the starvation line, or below the starvation line. Here are people facing all the trials of entry into the modern world, into the world of industrialism, and who are fighting to adjust themselves to it and to defend themselves meanwhile from its worst evils. Their *basic* problems of progress are not different in kind from ours; they are different only in degree. In the measure that we solve our own problems we can help them to solve their problems. In the measure that we lose this sense of common humanity, we shall fail to help them: for then, all too easily, we shall justify the profits that we make out of these hungry people by spurious talk of 'superiority.'

There is no difficulty about defining what is true development and what is not. Even on the basis of these few brief chapters we can come pretty near a tentative synthesis. We can see, at any rate, some of the essential matters which true development in Africa will have to include. We can see, for instance, that true development will necessarily include:—

(1) The State accumulation of capital from the profits of raw material exports; and the programmatic investment of this capital in non-profit-making primary construction—of communications, of schools, of hospitals, and so on;

(2) The raising of peasant production in the countryside by appropriate methods, and by the introduction on a co-operative basis of technical knowledge, hand-tools, and machinery;

(3) The relief of rural over-population (however under-populated many African territories may seem in relative terms) by the deliberate and permanent urbanization of large numbers of peasants, and their absorption into manufacturing as well as primary industry;

(4) The advancement of these urban, industrial workers by the abolition of colour bar and of discriminatory legislation (comparatively unimportant in West Africa); by the assurance of urban living conditions of which no one need be ashamed; and above all by the admission of Africans to full trade union rights as these are understood in advanced countries;

(5) The promotion of these policies by independent African governments in territories without permanent white or other settlement, or by governments based on a genuine multi-racial democracy in territories of mixed settlement.

But we can also begin to see the other side of the medal—the changes which these changes imply for us in Britain. We can see that these changes are not possible under a Government wedded to capitalism and the ways of the past: which is another way of saying that capitalism and the ways of the past can only continue to impoverish the colonies still further. We can see that a British Government carrying out a Socialist policy could not only put through these necessary and wise changes *vis-à-vis* the colonies, but could do this in such a way that all of us would be better off, rather than worse off. A Socialist Government could end our imperial epoch not only with honour, but eventually with profit also.

There will be nothing easy, automatic or painless in all this. But the difficulties will be lessened in proportion that we consider them beforehand, in proportion that we plan for the future. It is high time to begin.

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